



# 法神降临

游戏

墨乡 | 作品





*by Mo Xiang*

# Advent of the Archmage



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# **Advent of the Archmage**

– Descent of the God of Magic –

**- Volume 10 -**

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**[ Nyoibo Studio (Qidian International) ]**

# Chapter 501

## Worshipped as a Saint

The people who walked out of the forest looked very strange. They were all above six foot and were very muscular. They were shirtless, revealing their dark skin. Their features were menacing with a mouth of fangs and curled horns protruding from their foreheads. The only piece of clothing on them was a leather kilt around their waist.

They seemed to be hunters. Right now, they walked from the forest to a small town, carrying the corpses of a few giant unknown beasts.

Some people appeared in the town too. At closer inspection, they looked exactly like the hunters, albeit a bit weaker. They cheered happily after seeing the hunters. Some kids ran out too and circled the hunters. Their small hands grabbed at the prey while giggling.

Seeing this, Gretel determined, "They're demons, probably a type of horned demon... But for some reason, I feel like their bloodline isn't pure."

"Mixed demons?" Link asked. He also felt that these demons had a mixed aura. Sensing more closely, it felt gloomy but didn't have the chaotic fury of demons from the Abyss.

"Most likely. They don't seem very powerful. Should we go and check?"

"Sure." Link nodded.

He felt that mixed demons were weak. These hunters were at most Level-5 and were very average. Even if Gretel was momentarily disabled, nothing bad would happen with Link present.

He had another consideration. Gretel was beautiful, but that was from a human's beauty standard. Maybe she was an ugly hag to the demons so he wouldn't have to worry that her looks would cause trouble.

Seeing that the hunters had walked to the entrance of the town, Link carried Gretel out of the forest. Once outside, he canceled the Invisibility spell and strode towards

the mixed demon hunters.

They were discovered by the demons after 150 feet. These guys seemed really shocked. They looked left and right, yelled something, tossed their weapons onto the ground, and started running over. They yelled while running and seemed really excited.

"Are they going to attack?" Gretel asked Link.

Link shook his head. "Doesn't seem like it. They didn't bring weapons."

Despite his words, he still activated a transparent spatial defense shield around them, just in case.

A few seconds later, these demons were around 100 feet away. Then, ignoring the mud on the ground, they fell to their knees and practically prostrated themselves on the ground.

Link had never seen anyone attack on their knees, so he instantly relaxed after seeing this.

They kept mumbling while kneeling. Link listened for a bit. It seemed to be a variant of the lingua franca, and he could make out some words, but they spoke too quickly. They were also very nasally so Link couldn't figure out what they were saying.

"Tellie, can you understand?" Link asked.

Gretel shook her head lightly. "Just some words, like 'God's messenger,' 'saint,' and such. They seem to be worshipping us... No, I think they worship someone who looks like us."

This made sense. It was Link and Gretel's first time here. These demons shouldn't recognize him and wouldn't worship them. The only possibility was that a human who looked them had come before. This man was probably really powerful. Otherwise, he wouldn't be revered like this.

In that case, things would be much easier.

Link didn't speak. He moved his hand and activated the Magician's Hand. The kneeling bodies were lifted up.

They instinctively tried to resist, but Link's power was on a whole other level. They couldn't fight back at all.

The hunters were terrified and shocked. One of the most muscular started screaming something. Link could make out a few words, like "holy," "saint," "savior," and other reverent words.

He couldn't understand now, but he wasn't worried. For people like him and Gretel, learning a language, especially a variant of the lingua franca, was extremely easy. As long as they stayed with these people, they could learn it in a few days.

Before this, they would just have to stay quiet, listen, and watch.

He didn't care what the demons were saying. Keeping his face expressionless, he pointed at the small town and started walking over. The mixed demons exchanged glances and followed behind him.

When they got to a stone wall, Link decided to impress them with a spell. Waving his hand, a string of runes appeared on the wall. Then he patted the wall. Like a stone crashing into water, a door opened up in the wall.

Carrying Gretel, Link walked in. When the demons followed through, the simple portal had already disappeared. The demons touched the smooth wall, looking side to side, up and down. They just couldn't find a crack that could allow someone through.

By now, many people were gathered by the wall—all mixed demons. Seeing this, they all cried out. Link could hear shock and reverence in their voices.

The streets inside the town were very dirty, like the outer city of Scorched City. The ground was covered in mud, feces, shattered bones, rotting vegetables, and more. The entire town reeked of garbage.

Gretel furrowed her brows. She knew that she couldn't show her disgust, so she forced it in.

Link wasn't accustomed to this either. He cast a Levitation spell for them and put Gretel down. Then he cast a cleaning spell in the air. They wouldn't have to smell the disgusting odor anymore.

After that, he cast a force field that pushed the two forward. They floated slowly

towards the city center.

The mixed demons in the town clearly hadn't seen magic before. Seeing the two floating above the ground, they were all shocked. The result was that wherever Link and Gretel passed, the townspeople all knelt down in worship, disregarding the dirtiness on the ground.

After floating like that for a few minutes, the two saw some Warriors with dirty leather armor and steel spears. They walked over, escorting an old demon with a head of white hair and a face of wrinkles.

This elder was clearly of high status. He walked over unsteadily with his cane. The others all followed him respectfully.

After he saw Link and Gretel, he squinted and studied them for a long while. Then he tossed his cane to the side and fell to his knees.

Seeing him like this, the Warriors behind him followed him and knelt without hesitation. This made Link feel something was wrong.

The people they saw before were all commoners. Bluntly put, they were ignorant country bumpkins. As long as they looked similar, it was easy to mistake Link and Gretel for someone else. This elder was different though. From looks of things, he should be smarter. He might not be very knowledgeable, but should at least know more than the regular citizens. He'd studied them carefully before kneeling too. This meant that Link and Gretel looked very, very similar to the man they worshipped.

"This doesn't make sense," Gretel also whispered. She found it odd too.

But they had a language barrier right now and couldn't communicate. Though they had doubts, they couldn't say anything. What could they do?

Link looked around and saw some smaller demons kneeling in the crowd... They should be the kids. They clearly didn't feel as reverent as the adults. Though they were kneeling too, they kept sneaking glances around.

Link also saw many smoked vegetables and meat hanging from the houses on the side of the street. There wasn't much though. The clothing of the villagers was very shabby too. The men were mostly naked with a rag around their waist. The women were slightly better, but only with an extra rag around their chest. The kids were basically



all naked.

The mixed demons here had horrible living conditions and lacked much material wealth.

Thinking of this, he got an idea. He would learn the language first, but he didn't want to learn from adults. Their thinking was less innocent and could be troublesome. He would learn from these kids and know many things that the adults weren't willing to say.

Link kept his expression stern. First, he waved at the elder's cane, and the plane wooden staff flew to his hands.

He sneakily took out a piece of Mithril and used enchantment to fuse the Mithril into the cane. He added a Level-5 strengthening spell and then used the Mithril to draw many elegant patterns.

This way, the cane became beautiful like a piece of art. Something so beautiful had never appeared in the town before. Link could see the desire clearly in the elder's eyes.

Link didn't give him the cane immediately. He pointed at some kids and then pushed the cane forward a bit. His meaning was clear: exchange the kids for the cane.

The elder hesitated and looked to the children's parents. Link followed his gaze and pointed his fingers at them, casting a dragon healing spell to all these demons.

Link could tell that they all had some sort of ailment due to long years of labor. With the spell, all their problems were cured. Many men had been hunched over, but now they stood up tall, full of energy. They seemed to have aged backwards instantly.

This action was like a god's hand. Instead of punishment, it was healing. It was also showing that the kids wouldn't be treated badly with him, let alone be in danger.

Some parents voluntarily pushed their kids to Link—five in total.

Link nodded lightly and tossed the cane to the elder. Then he pointed to the forest outside the town. Without explaining himself, he activated the Dimensional Jump.

A white light appeared. Under the townspeople's reverent gazes, Link, Gretel, and the five children disappeared from the town.



Buzz. The group reappeared in the forest.

"What are you planning?" Gretel finally asked.

"We'll stay here for a while and learn from the kids. After we know the situation, we can use the locals' help to find the materials needed for your antidote. I'll also use this time to study this meteorite."

There was actually another reason. He felt that the people here had reacted too strangely to them. This island might contain some secret. He had to at least figure out if they were friends or foes.

Gretel didn't really mind. "That works."

Link chuckled. "So I'm going to build a safe fortress first."

For a Legendary figure, turning dirt into stone and stone into a building was a simple task.

# Chapter 502

## The Legend of the One-Eyed Giants (1)

Link waved a hand at the five mixed demon children around him and pointed at the woods nearby. As he was not familiar with the local language, Link activated a Level-0 Suggestion spell.

"Go!"

The children straightened up and walked over to where Link had pointed. Gretel too stood at a safe distance from him.

Link found a flat surface in the woods after walking around it for a bit. He let out a burst of Dragon Power, and a white spatial ripple spread out in all four directions from his body.

The trees around him were all felled in an instant.

As the trees fell one after the other, the air was filled with a swarm of scaled-down versions of Link's Vacuum Blades. The translucent magical razors raced towards the trees and began shaving off their leaves and branches till the trees lay completely naked on the ground.

As the spatial distortions raged on in the area, the clean logs fell in neat piles back on the ground. Link then dried them all up with a brilliant red blaze. The ground around him was now leveled and ready for construction.

He then let his Dragon Power flow into the earth. Three seconds later, he flicked both his wrists up and whispered, "Rise..."

A brown-greyish dirt castle began taking form. At the same time, a blue-white circle of light had appeared five feet in the air. As the dirt rose through the circle, it was instantly transformed into hard, polished stone.

This was simply a Level-4 Dirt-to-Stone spell. Its main function was to turn ordinary dirt into magical runestone, but Link had taken the spell to another level.

What he had sculpted with such a simple spell was nothing short of a miracle.

The mixed demon children standing in the distance looked on at Link's work, utterly dumbfounded. Some of them were left speechless, their eyes wide like saucers. A few seemed to have forgotten that they still had their grimy little thumbs in their mouths, while others let their jaws gape open, thin slivers of saliva falling from the corners of their mouths.

In no more than five minutes, a 50-foot-tall, 40 cubic feet castle now stood majestically before them. Surrounding the castle was a great wall, on which wooden doors mounted with runes were set.

The castle's general structure was now complete, but its details remained far from complete. Looking at the shoddy creation before him, Link felt his compulsion to magically smooth out all its imperfections acting up.

He activated Void Walk and began flying around the wall in circles.

He began carving out embellishments across the castle walls and the walls inside and outside the castle. He then proceeded to lay out the floors and set up the castle's furniture and wooden window frames with the piles of dry logs outside.

Ten minutes later, after making ten rounds around the castle, Link was finally done with the whole castle. The castle's details and furniture inside it were all sculpted with an exquisiteness that was contrasted splendidly by the building's overall simplistic style.

Link landed on the dirt ground within the castle. With a push from his hand, the dirt ground was instantly transformed into a flat surface composed of jade tiles.

Link walked forth, and the jade-green surface began snaking forward. When he exited the castle walls, a smooth green path continued extending outward beneath the forest's shade.

The path continued spreading out a hundred feet away from the castle grounds until it finally reached the Red Dragon Queen. Link smiled at her. He held out a hand and bowed to her.

"Your Highness, your palace is ready for you."

Gretel smiled back. "If word of you using your enchantment skills for such a menial task gets out, you'll probably be the laughing stock of the magical world."

Despite what she had said, Gretel was impressed with Link's handiwork. She strolled along the jade-tiled path towards the dazzling castle.

The mixed demon children beside her stared at Link with fearful eyes.

When Link turned towards them, some of the children imitated the deferential posture their elders had assumed back then, prostrating themselves before him and not daring to make direct eye contact with Link. However, they continued gossiping excitedly among themselves. Even though Link did not understand a word from them, he could clearly sense their amazement.

Link did not immediately let the children stand up. Instead, he listened to their ramblings for a few minutes, trying to make sense of some of their words. He then spoke to them, "Stand up now, and follow me."

Saying this, Link headed for the castle after Gretel.

The children seemed to understand what Link had said. Pausing for a moment, they rose back to their feet and timidly followed Link to the castle.

As they were still children, they did not have much self-restraint. After walking for a while, they had completely forgotten their deference towards Link and began chattering among themselves again.

Link did not stop them and listened intently to them, trying to learn the mixed demons' tongue from their excited chatter.

When they reached the entrance of the castle, Link who had been eavesdropping on the children's conversation all this time, now had a better understanding of their language.

Stopping at the doorway, he turned and pointed at the children. Points of light containing a Cleansing spell and an Enchantment spell floated from his finger towards them.

The Cleansing spell cleansed them of all dirt on their bodies, whereas the Enchantment spell transformed the rags that they were wearing into beautiful sets of



clothing.

Without waiting for the children to finish marveling at their new clothes, Link pointed at Gretel, who was admiring the elegant furniture in the castle's great hall. He said to them, "She, queen, mistress. Obey mistress' orders, understand?"

"Understand," the children timidly replied.

Link then pointed to himself. "Me, the castle's housekeeper. I'm in charge of you, will train you to serve mistress better. Understand?"

"Understand..." replied the children. Their replies were somewhat disorganized. One of them still had his thumb in his mouth, and his voice came out muffled as a result.

Link wagged a finger at him, and said, "No sucking on thumbs, or else you'll end up like him."

Saying this, he snapped his fingers and magically sealed the child's mouth shut. A look of surprise came over his face, as he tried to pull his thumb out of his mouth, but to no avail.

The other children looked in horror at him. One of them, a girl probably, started to cry, and the other three followed suit. Chaos descended on them in an instant.

Link cast a Silence spell on them, and then took out four pieces of dried fruit bits from his spatial pendant. He gave a piece to each of them. "This is good stuff."

The four children who were not sucking on their thumbs instantly stopped crying. They looked at the fruit bits warily. Then one of the bolder children, no longer able to resist the sweet scent coming from it, took a small bite. His face split into a wide smile, and he excitedly squeaked to the others, "It's sweet."

All four children wiped their tears and began nibbling on the dried fruit bit. The child who had his mouth sealed shut by Link had momentarily forgotten his ordeal. He now stared hungrily at his companions who were chewing on their bits of candy in front of him.

Link removed the spell from him and then held out a piece of dried fruit bit in front of him. Just as the child reached out for it excitedly, Link pulled his hand back and stuffed the candy into his own mouth. He said to them as he chewed on his own candy, "Obey

my orders, and you'll get something good to eat. My first rule is no thumb-sucking. Got it?"

"Got it, housekeeper," all five of them responded in unison. Four of their faces were filled with excitement, though one still remained teary-eyed. With a tasty treat as their reward, their memories had gotten a lot better.

"Alright, for my second rule, keep yourself clean at all times. Clean yourself up in the pool if you somehow get yourself dirty."

"Okay."

"For my third rule..."

Link began listing out the rules of his castle to the children, enforcing them with either the promise of a delicious titbit or some horrifying form of magical punishment. Ten minutes later, he had finally reformed them into clean, obedient, well-mannered servants of the castle.

As he brought all five of them into the castle, Link began assigning their rooms and duties to them. He then gave each of them a beautiful mithril bracelet, which allowed him to eavesdrop on them whenever he wanted. Link wanted to have a better understanding of the island itself by listening to the children's conversations.

"Always keep it on your wrist. Don't take it off, or you won't have anything to eat." Saying this, Link gave each of them a piece of sweet cheese.

"I understand, housekeeper." All five children had committed his teachings to memory. Though they were famished at this point, they remained standing upright, not daring to touch the pieces of cheese given to them.

"Good. You can eat."

When he had finished speaking, the children stuffed the bits of cheese greedily into their little mouths. As they chewed, they glanced sideways at Link, uncertain whether they had done something wrong.

Link observed them for a moment, then nodded. "Good. Now, remember this last rule. Assemble in the great hall for your meals whenever the bracelet lights up. Understand?"

"Got it, housekeeper."

"Good, you can now go and play outside." Link vanished in a white light, and in an instant, he reappeared beside the Red Dragon Queen.

The Red Dragon Queen was out on the balcony on the third floor of the castle. She leaned against the railing and gazed at the mixed demons' village in the distance. Sensing the flurry of Link's appearance beside her, she asked without turning to him, "Have you gotten the little ones prepared?"

"Of course. In fact, I've almost mastered their tongue by now." Link handed a runestone to the Red Dragon Queen and said, "You can use this to hear what they're talking about with each other."

"Smart move." Gretel accepted the runestone with a smile, then asked, "What do you plan on doing next?"

Link already had his next step planned out. He took out the purple meteorite. "I'll need to study the meteorite's special properties. In any case, we need to find a suitable dampening material for the singularity explosion as soon as possible."

"I'll let you handle matters on that end, while I'll try to understand the locals here. In the meanwhile, I'll look for the rest of the medicinal herbs that I'm still missing for the antidote. Oh, I do hope the little ones would be of some help in that area."

Link smiled. "They are quite intelligent. I'll forge you a couple of magical gear later on so that you can defend yourself against any threat in the forest. I remember the kids mentioning something about a one-eyed king."

He also had an eavesdropping runestone of his own. He held it to his ear and heard the children's voices flow out from it.

One of the speakers was a girl. "My grandma said that no one should build their houses in the forest, because it's the one-eyed king's domain, and he'll punish anyone who trespasses on his forest."

"What are you scared of? The one-eyed king won't be able to defeat the housekeeper. Didn't you see how powerful he was?"

"But my grandma said that the one-eyed king is as huge as a mountain. He'll tear the

castle apart with just a sneeze. He even ate a hundred llamas in one gulp. If he's upset, he'll start stomping about, and the ground beneath him will split open."

The children seemed to be describing a monstrous creature living in the woods. Though it all sounded like a fairy tale, there was always some truth in legends. Also, Link had noticed that there were no buildings anywhere in the forest.

He looked at Gretel. "Do you think there's actually a one-eyed king?"

Gretel smiled back. "Maybe. The people in the village do seem to be frightened by the castle's appearance. You're the duke of the dragon race, anyway; do you really have anything to fear here?"



# Chapter 503

## The Legend of the One-Eyed Giants (2)

Three in the afternoon, one hour after Link finished constructing the castle, a group came from the demon village in the distance. The leader was the elder from earlier.

Looking down from the balcony, Link could see that the demons were anxious and restless. Something incredible seemed to have happened.

When the group was around 100 feet away from the castle gates, they stopped. They paced before the door, wanting to approach it but seemingly stunned by the beautiful building looming over them.

They debated there, wondering if they should enter.

Standing on the balcony, Link wanted to laugh. White light flashed, and he appeared above the city walls. The demons below immediately noticed him. They fell silent and fell to their knees. Then the elder started yelling.

This time, Link could mostly understand.

"God's highest messenger in the mortal world, I have a very, very important thing that may pertain to your safety that I must tell you."

Link already guessed what he was going to say. He purposely waited a few seconds, scaring the demons so much that they started sweating. Finally, he drawled, "Speak."

His voice wasn't loud but sounded clear under the spell.

The elder started yelling again, "God's highest—"

"Enough, get to the point," Link interrupted.

"God... God's messenger, I must tell you that the forest is the territory of the one-eyed King Morophir. He is very strong and has a bad temper. He doesn't like it when people live in the forest..."

The one-eyed king actually had a name. That meant this guy really did exist. After thinking a bit, Link asked, "Have you seen him before?"

The elder and strong men beside him immediately nodded furiously. The elder even opened his arms wide in an exaggerated pose. "Yes, yes. He's as tall as the mountain. When you stand below him, you can't even see his head. His arms are many times thicker than the waist of the red elephant. His slap can turn you into minced meat. He uses the trees as weapons. He can just pull up ancient trees that a group of people can't even embrace with linking arms. Then he waves the tree and hits anyone he sees. No one is his match. He has a lot of powerful underlings too!"

His explanation was a bit exaggerated and filled with subjectively delusional descriptions. But when he spoke, the other demons all nodded in agreement. This meant that most of his words were objective. They probably really had seen Morophr before.

When Link heard the last sentence, he couldn't help but smile. Fighting with trees is such a primitive way of fighting. This is probably a giant with endless strength. Judging from the measurements of the trees, he should be around 100 to 150 feet tall. Indeed, he's unstoppable for regular people.

Thinking of this, he waved his hand. "I see," he said. "You can go back."

Before the terrified townspeople could reply, Link waved his hand after speaking. He used the Dimensional Jump to send them back to the village.

Returning to the castle, he saw that Gretel was telling horror stories to the demon children. They trembled in fear, curling into balls, but they loved the stories. They ended up shaking like quails, making Gretel giggle.

Seeing that Link was back, the kids immediately stood and said in unison, "Housekeeper."

Gretel didn't think Link could discipline children too. She couldn't help but laugh again. After her laughter subsided, she asked, "So there really is a one-eyed king?"

"Yes. He's probably like a Mountain Giant. It has a name too—Morophr," Link answered with a laugh.

Mountain Giants were giant earth-element creatures in Firuman. They were as big as

a mountain and on average, above 120 feet tall. They also fought by pulling up trees and were terrifyingly strong. The earth-element power within them was usually above Level-8.

To regular people, this was a god-like existence. But as strong as they were, it was still mortal power. A Legendary figure could still kill thousands with one attack.

In this case, Gretel didn't worry anymore. Chuckling, she said, "Then I'll hand it over to you, house... keeper."

Link laughed awkwardly. After a pause, he said, "I'll go fortify the castle."

This wasn't to defend the one-eyed king's direct attack. Rather, it was to protect against the shockwaves.

Link went to work. Gretel seemed to really like these demon children. She had them gather around and started telling the horror story again. They were so scared they kept shaking.

On the other hand, Link was outside the building.

The castle used regular magic runestones around Level-4. If a Level-4 figure kicked the stones with all their might, it would cause quite some damage. This was naturally insufficient against someone in Level-8. Link used the Void Walk to fly around the castle, continuously slapping on runes.

The walls were white-ish before. After he circled it with runes a few times, a 20-centimeter-thick, translucent, jade-like shield appeared on the walls. This was Level-9 material. Even if the one-eyed king attacked directly, it could last for a while.

After this, Link turned to go study the meteorite. But after flying for a bit, he looked up at the sky. It was four in the afternoon. It was getting late and was dinnertime.

Back in the day, before Gretel's power was sealed, this wouldn't be important. She could go one year without eating. Things were different now. She wasn't any stronger than the others; she needed three meals per day to replenish her energy.

With this in mind, Link flew into the forest. After a while, he carried back an animal like a wild goat.

He first went to the creek not too far from the castle and treated the body with a spell. He separated the meat, bones, and tendons. Thinking back to the delicacies he'd eaten before, he started making it with spells by the creek.

It was overly luxurious to cook meat with a fire spell, but it was fast. Within ten seconds, the taste would settle so Link could experiment quickly. He was a perfectionist too and had to make everything perfect.

The result was that Link tried 109 times within 15 minutes. He kept revising the recipe until he grasped the best fire and amount of spices for a rack of lamb.

When the final result came out, Link tasted what he'd made. He smacked his lips, very satisfied with the taste.

It wasn't enough to just eat meat though. Link then found some edible plants by the creek. He used small water and fire spells to experiment dozens of times before getting nice results too.

After finishing everything, Link flew back to the castle.

"Dinner time!"

As he spoke, Link waved his hand. Dozens of elegant plates appeared on the long dining table in the castle. They were filled with food that looked delicious, all made by Link.

Gretel brought the children over. She sat into the main seat and tasted Link's creation. Her eyes brightened and glanced at him, satisfied. Smiling, she said, "Mm, not bad. Keep working hard."

Link smiled wryly. It felt like he'd doomed himself. However, he only had to wait until Gretel's power recovered. He didn't have to go for that long.

Turning to the children, Gretel said, "Kids, eat up."

The five kids had been eyeing the food for a while. They wanted to just pounce onto the food, but with Link present, they didn't dare go too wild. They had to use the utensils and eat the delicious food bit by bit. They looked very careful.

Link also ate some food. It was a small snack for him. When everyone was done eating,



he used a cleaning spell to clean everything. Then he finally went to a quiet room in the top level of the castle to study the meteorite.

The meteorite was dark purple and was room temperature to the touch. When he tapped it, it buzzed softly. It was very strange.

Link cast a small Void Destruction fireball; it exploded on the surface of the meteorite. After the flames disappeared, the meteorite remained unchanged. Even the temperature didn't change.

An interesting rock, but what's the maximum temperature you can withstand?

If it really could be used as a buffer, Link estimated that it must be able to withstand at least a Level-20 attack to create a sufficient buffer for the singularity explosion.

Level-20 was god-level power. Link couldn't do it by himself, but he could use a magic seal to demonstrate it. Of course, the magic seal would be complicated and consume many materials.

This was necessary to experiment though. Link put away the meteorite and took out all sorts of material. He started constructing the high-level magic seal in the room.

It was very, very difficult to create a Level-20 magic seal when he was at Level-11. Link put in everything he knew while using up all the precious material he had. After spending five days, he finally created a large magic seal.

It took up most of the room. It contained more than 10,000 rune wheels, all sorts of techniques, all the magical knowledge Link had, and the thin piece of time.

Link placed the meteorite onto the experiment rune and then started feeding Dragon Power to the magic seal.

He couldn't accomplish it so easily. In reality, the magic seal would consolidate his Level-11 power to Level-20. Even if he wanted a shred of Level-20 power, Link needed to add in a tremendous amount of Dragon Power.

Link kept inputting power. One hour, two hours, three... At ten hours, the large magic seal was still unresponsive. The only change was that the runes were a bit brighter.

I need at least two million Legendary Dragon Power points to get a bit of Level-20

power. I hope no accidents happen.

If the magic seal failed, and all that Dragon Power exploded at once, the castle would be demolished. That would suck.

The only good thing was that Gretel had taken the kids to pick medicinal herbs and weren't inside the castle. Link could experiment without concern.

This magic seal required two million Dragon Power points. However, this didn't mean that a shred of Level-20 power would equal two million Dragon Power points.

In reality, a true Level-20 figure would think that this magic seal was extremely crude. A lot of power was wasted during the entire process. Link himself estimated that 99.9% of power was wasted. Only 0.1% of Dragon Power would be converted into Level-20 power.

Link sighed. In the end, I'm still not knowledgeable enough.

After resting, he continued feeding in power for another five hours. When the five hours were close to an end, a tiny—almost insignificant—bit of power appeared at the end of the magic seal.

The power seemed solid and was as thin as a needle. It was white and not very bright, but glancing at it, it felt piercing to the eye. Link didn't dare to look for long. He quickly averted his eyes.

This bit of power was scattering as soon as it appeared. From Link's estimates, if it scattered one centimeter, it would completely degrade into regular power. This kind of power was useless in a battle; it could only be used for experiments.

It streaked across the meteorite. Then with a poof, the dark purple meteorite collapsed into a bunch of bubbling purple liquid. It couldn't resist the Level-20 power at all.

Link was greatly disappointed.

The meteorite wasn't strong enough at all. It was so far away, but this was the strongest material Link had. He couldn't replace it, so he had to improve it.

How? Alchemy and enchantments were the only options.

If he wanted alchemy, he'd have to ask Gretel, but she hadn't recovered yet... This was a bottleneck. Link thought some more and decided to find Gretel. He would help her recover first.

He had given Gretel a tracking rune, so he just teleported over. With a few flashes of light, he was beside Gretel.

She was in a forest a few miles away. When Link reached her, she was staring at a huge footprint.

Seeing Link come, Gretel said, "The footprint is fresh. From the looks of things, this guest is at least 300 tons. It's even bigger than a Mountain Giant."

Link glanced over. The footprint was about two feet deep, 15 feet long, and six feet wide. There were two toes, and the two footprints were around 60 feet apart.

"Indeed very big. Should we go look?" Link asked.

Gretel shook her head quickly. "I don't want to keep you back. You go... Here, I drew all the herbs I need. If you see them along the way, take them for me. The more, the better."

Link took the paper and skimmed it. The drawings were very realistic and detailed. It also came with specimens.

"I understand. Be careful while I go check it out."

# Chapter 504

## The Legend of the One-Eyed Giants (3)

The footprints in the forest were fresh. Link had no trouble tracking them.

Whoever these footprints belonged to seemed to be a really huge fellow. Link continued his pursuit, not worrying about being shaken off by his prey. Along the way, he picked up some of the medicinal herbs that Gretel still needed.

Soon, he had gathered a whole bunch of herbs in his hand. Gretel had even told him that the more he could find in the forest, the better.

After pursuing his prey and collecting herbs along the way for more than 30 miles through the forest, he finally saw a lake up ahead.

The lake was oval-shaped, its diameter more than a thousand feet. Its water was crystal clear. Near the reeds on the edge of the lake, Link caught a glimpse of what he had been tracking.

It was a giant. He seemed to be around 150 feet tall, almost humanoid. He did not have much body hair, or even any clothing, covering his muscular body.

Below the giant's crotch, Link could see, a bit too vividly, two huge meat balls swaying along with the giant's movements. A few birds had landed on the giant's vast body, apparently looking for food on it.

At that moment, the giant was squatting beside the lake, scooping up water in his hands to his lips. He would sometimes catch a huge fish in his huge hands. With an idiotic smile on his face, he would then pick it up between his fingers, cocked his head back and let the slippery thing slide into his great maw without even chewing.

He seemed to be having fun with all this, as he would chuckle to himself for a long while. When he was done laughing, the giant continued drinking from the lake.

Link observed the creature from behind a tree and noticed a huge wooden stick on the ground beside the giant. Just as he had heard from the natives, it was the trunk of a

tree whose leaves and branches had been plucked clean off. One end of it was jagged.

Link changed his perspective from behind the tree and saw that the giant was physically similar to a human being. The only difference was that he only had one eye. The eye looked out from above the giant's nose bridge. The huge orb practically covered half his face. It was also radiating an unsettling orange glow.

This must be the one-eyed king, Link thought to himself. He carefully felt the giant's aura. It was powerful, approximately at Level-8 Pinnacle and close to Pinnacle power in the mortal realm.

Of course, no matter how powerful a mortal was, they were still a mortal. To a Legendary master, an opponent's size mattered little.

Whether the big guy's brain is as big as the rest of his body is remains to be seen, Link thought. He walked out from behind the tree, and rushed at the cyclops, shouting, "Hey, big guy!"

He had spoken those words in the native language. He had also used a bit of magic to amplify his voice.

"Huh?" The giant heard him, stopped drinking, and turned to where the sound had come from.

He had not expected such a loud voice to come from Link's relatively tiny body. When his eye fell on Link, he ignored him and searched elsewhere for the big fellow that the voice had belonged to.

Link laughed uncontrollably at this. Seems like he's not as intelligent as he looks. All brawn, and not much else up there.

He took a few steps forward, and waved at the giant, shouting once more, "Hey, over here!"

This time, the one-eyed giant noticed him. He stooped down to give him a closer look. He then asked strangely, "Little one, why do you have such a loud voice?"

Link smiled. He had followed the giant to measure his threat level. From the looks of things, the giant was nothing more than a big brute.

If that was the case, Link only needed to give the giant a big scare that he would not dare approach his castle.

He then activated Void Walk and flew into the air. He accelerated, and with a boom in the air, Link landed on the giant's shoulder in an instant.

He walked along his shoulder casually and said to him, "Big guy, have you seen the castle in the forest?"

"What are you doing there? Get off me, little one... castle? No, I have not seen it. Where is it? I want to push it down. I love pushing down castles."

The giant's speech was incoherent. His train of thought also seemed susceptible to influence.

Despite being distracted by Link's mention of the castle so easily, his hand moved quickly to his shoulder, ready to swat him off. Had Link been slower to react, he would have been squashed into a meat puddle by the giant's hand.

It would also have been an extremely painful experience to be hit by the giant's hand if Link did not put up any form of defense around him in time. Of course, he did not let such a thing happen.

Link did not dodge the giant's hand. Instead, he remained sitting on his shoulder and cast a Level-10 spatial forcefield around him.

As soon as he finished casting his spell, there was a thump above him. The cyclops' hand struck the forcefield. Through its effect, the hand's impact was redirected around the forcefield without harming Link.

"Eh? Why can't I hit my own shoulder?" The cyclops roared in surprise. He swung his hand a few more times towards his shoulder, and the result was the same. His hand slipped away harmlessly from his shoulder each time he swatted his hand at Link.

Link remained calmly sitting on his shoulder. He then asked, "Big guy, do you have any friends?"

"Yes, I have many friends and a king. My hand seems to be broken. I can't hit my own shoulder... This is strange," the giant replied. He continued swatting at Link on his shoulder, without even realizing the futility of his efforts.

So he's not the one-eyed king? The giant's answer stunned Link. He thought for a bit about this, then asked, "Can you bring me to see your king?"

"Why should I bring you? My shoulder, my hand, they're all busted... Wahhh!" Suddenly, the giant cried out in frustration. Huge drops of tears welled up from his one eye, and he continued striking at his shoulder even more persistently.

Noticing how exhausted the giant was, Link flew up and landed on the top of his head.

Thump! The cyclops finally managed to hit his own shoulder with his hand. He laughed out loud, "Haha, my hand's all better, and there's nothing wrong with my shoulder now. Eh, where did that little guy go?"

He looked around but did not see Link anywhere. He then mumbled to himself, "Strange."

He then squatted back down and resumed his drinking.

On his head, Link sighed with disappointment at the giant's obvious lack of intelligence. He activated a Level-1 Suggestion spell, then spoke, "Go and see your king!"

"Huh?" The giant looked about once more, but could not see anything or anyone who had said those words. His hand reached up to scratch at his head as he said strangely, "Why do I have to go see the king? I won't go."

He then continued scooping up water to drink.

"Go and see the king!"

"What was that? Is there someone talking in my head?"

"Go and see the king!"

"Alright, alright, no need to say it twice, I'm going." The one-eyed giant finally gave up drinking. He stood up, picked up his huge wooden stick and walked away from the lake in huge strides.

Link sighed exasperatedly as he held his forehead in one hand. Something must have gone terribly wrong in the process of creating this great brute. He did not even have

enough mental fortitude to resist a Level-1 Suggestion spell.

The giant walked at a somewhat quick pace, covering 30 feet of ground in a second. The trees around him were nothing more than weeds below him that did absolutely nothing to slow him down.

Link would sometimes spot in the vicinity a medicinal herb that Gretel still needed, and leaped from the giant's head to add it to his collection. When he was done, he would leap back onto his free ride through the woods.

After walking through the forest for two hours, they had finally reached a huge mountain valley. In the distance, Link could see that there were a lot of buildings in it.

The valley's architectural style was simplistic. The buildings seemed to have been built by simply piling up huge white rocks on top of one another. Its only defining characteristic was that everything was almost as big as the Dragon Temple itself.

In the middle of the valley stood a huge white building. It was the only place there that had a roof on it, which was more than a hundred feet off the ground. The building itself was around a few thousand cubic feet. In it, a giant wearing black fur clothing with his shoulders laid bare was contentedly eating a large animal that had just been cooked.

A great bonfire burned outside the building. Two naked cyclops were hard at work, turning the same kind of meat above the fire.

There were many giants living in the mountain valley. They were all naked, regardless of gender. The giant in the middle of the valley seemed to be the only one fully clothed and had others waiting on him.

He must be the one-eyed king.

The giant also seemed to be a lot more intelligent than the rest. He was able to notice Link from where he sat, but his following reaction caught Link completely by surprise. The giant king threw his food to one side and rushed out from the building. He took a few mighty steps forward and then fell on his knees. He roared, "Our almighty savior has come to set us free!"

Link frowned at this. First the mixed demons, now the cyclops, what in the world was going on with these people?



# Chapter 505

## Mighty Man or Liar?

### One-eyed Giant Gorge

The One-eyed Giant that brought Link back didn't know what had happened. Seeing the one-eyed king yell while kneeling before him, he waved his hands immediately.

"King, king, I'm not god's messenger. I'm Auka. Don't you recognize me?"

The one-eyed king lost his temper. He grabbed a three-foot-wide rock and hurled it at the giant Auka. "You idiot," he exclaimed. "The god's messenger is above your head!"

Auka's head started bleeding from the hit. He clutched his head and scurried away.

Link flew down and hovered around 100 feet from the one-eyed king. "Why do you call me god's messenger?" he asked curiously.

Seeing that Link could fly without wings, the one-eyed king grew even more reverent. He prostrated himself on the ground and looked up. "God once gave an oracle," he said respectfully. "If someone who looks exactly like him appears one day, he'll be the messenger that was sent to save us sinners."

"God? Oracle?" Link was even more confused. Did the God of Light do this? It didn't seem right though. If it was the God of Light, the game system would notify him. It wouldn't be so quiet like now.

Of course, the system might not have felt the need to notify him. But was there a need to be so mysterious about this?

The one-eyed king nodded furiously. "Yes, an oracle. We pass it down every generation. It won't be wrong. Not only do you look exactly the same as in the oracle, but you also appeared at the same time too."

This explanation shocked Link. The detail about his appearance raised some alarms in his mind.

Since the oracle said that the god's messenger would appear at this time, then he was sure that he wasn't it. The true messenger would very possibly arrive soon.

Gods couldn't just come to the mortal world, but if the god's messenger wanted to win over these mortals, they had to be at least at the Legendary level. If they were unfriendly, it would be problematic.

Thinking of this, Link said, "Since he's a god, you must have a statue. Let me see it."

"Yes, Messenger." The one-eyed king stood up and walked deep into the gorge. Link hovered in the air and followed 100 feet behind him.

Along the way, many One-eyed Giants looked at him curiously. Perhaps because they feared the lord, they watched from afar without getting close.

The gorge was huge. It was at least six miles long and almost 2000 feet wide. Going down the path, Link discovered that there were many giants here of all gender and age. They were all naked too. Of the 600 or so giants, there were at least 200 in their prime.

Seeing Link study his people, the one-eyed king said in disdain, "Messenger, those guys are all brainless idiots. They don't even deserve to be mentioned."

Link didn't think so though. They were all strong Warriors above Level-8. The one-eyed king was at the pinnacle of Level-9. Other than the king who was smart and difficult to fool, the others seemed easily satisfied. If they were given nice food and clothes that only the leader wore, they would probably work for Link.

Such powerful strength and large bodies would become machines of terror on the battlefield. Of course, Link didn't know if that would work before he understood the situation of the island.

Around ten minutes later, Link followed the one-eyed king to the end of the gorge. It was empty here, without a single giant. The terrain was flat too. A white 250-foot-tall statue stood in the center.

The statue looked exactly like a human. Studying it, Link's features did look somewhat like it, but just a little. Actually, Link had a really plain face, so he looked similar to almost every human.

To a human, he would look very different from the statue. To a foreign race, there was no difference. (It was hard for anyone to distinguish faces of another race. For example, two dogs might look the same to you.) It was normal to get the wrong person.

Thud. The one-eyed king was already on the ground. "This is the mighty Thoreau," he said. "He has always been protecting our island from being invaded by evil, but evil has never left. He is patrolling outside the island, waiting for a chance to come devour our souls. Thus, the mighty Thoreau left the oracle that 1000 years later, his messenger would return and help us defeat the evil once and for all."

With that, he turned to Link. His yellow eye was filled with fervor. "Now you really are here. We can finally be free of the evil threat."

Link was totally confused. He'd never heard of the mighty Thoreau before—not in the books he'd read or in the game... Wait, something flashed past his mind. It was a memory about the game.

It was really fleeting. Link had probably glanced at the information before but didn't read it carefully.

He fell silent and worked on getting rid of distracting thoughts. He wanted to reconstruct that wisp of smoke-like memory. It was useless. He only had a vague impression. The memory remained in a nameless corner, deep in his mind. The more he tried to remember, the less he could.

Since he couldn't remember, Link could only give up. "What evil do you mean?" he asked.

"The evil outside the island. They're everywhere in the sea. They capsize all the ships, cover the sky, and blocked all ways for us to contact the mainland of light. That isn't important now though. You're here, and even the sky is brighter!"

Link was shocked. He paid attention to one detail. "You said they cover the sky?"

He could personally verify this. When he and Gretel entered the Firuman Realm and was miles in the air, he was sure that nothing was covering the sky.

However, Link then remembered that Gretel had told him that 400 years ago, she'd traveled throughout the realm with her mother. They hadn't seen such a large island. To them, the Isle of Dawn was the biggest island.

This meant that the sky had once been covered, but now it was gone. It had disappeared within these 400 years.

But why?

Link's thoughts whirled and quickly thought of two possibilities. One, the god's messenger had already appeared, but the one-eyed king didn't know. Two, the evil that the king spoke of had internal conflicts.

The first was much more possible.

Then, is this messenger a friend or a foe?

Link didn't know. He only knew that this island wasn't as safe as he'd thought. Both the evil in the sea and Thoreau's messenger threatened them.

Thinking of this, Link ignored the one-eyed king. The space around him blurred slightly. This was the sign of the Void Walk operating at the extreme.

The next instant, there was a boom. Sound waves spread in all direction, forcing the one-eyed king back when he was hit. At the same time, Link disappeared.

He flew back to the castle. In mid-air, his mind flashed. He thought of why the name Thoreau was familiar.

On the world channel of the game, there was a notification that a player found a treasure. The notifications here moved really quickly, and players always found treasures. Link had just glanced at it casually.

With this clue, Link thought back a bit deeper. More and more information was dragged out.

Evil God Thoreau, eternal prison, perfect fraud, committing horrors in the name of justice... There wasn't much, but the words kept jumping out. They were all bad news too, but it was what the notification had included.

This was all Link knew. He didn't know about any details, but it was enough to put him on high alert. He was less than 100 miles from the castle. With his speed, he could get there within five minutes.

Four minutes later, the castle appeared in his vision. Nothing was strange. From afar, Link saw Gretel washing herbs by the creek near the castle. The five mixed demons were helping her. Everything looked normal.

He was slightly relieved. Slowing down, he adjusted his direction and flew to Gretel. When he landed slowly, the kids stood up immediately and greeted him. "Housekeeper."

Link nodded. Then he said to Gretel in the lingua franca, "Tellie, I think I know why we were mistaken for god's messenger."

"Oh?" Gretel arched an eyebrow. "Tell me."

Link told her everything he'd heard along the way, including the details about the Evil God and fraud. When he was done, Gretel furrowed her brows. "I heard some legends from these little guys. There's also a mighty figure, but in the legend, he saved the world."

Just in case, Gretel didn't say Thoreau's name. She knew that if he really was a god, he would be alerted if she said his name aloud.

Link thought about it. "The legends don't contradict with what I heard. It's just that one is on the surface while the other is deeper. From what I know, gods are all difficult to figure out. If this mighty person really is a god, no one would know what he wants... I think we should prepare well or leave quickly."

"You're right. Did you get herbs?"

"Of course. I got a lot." Link took out all the herbs he'd picked along the way. It was a few hundred pounds.

Gretel checked all of them and then chuckled. "It's enough. I'm not strong enough so you'll have to make the potion for me. I'll instruct you."

"Got it."

# Chapter 506

## The Arrival of the Actual God's Messenger

In the castle

Link stood beside a crystal cauldron almost as tall as him. He was busy stirring the thick medicinal concoction within the cauldron with a crystal rod.

The concoction was so thick that each stroke had taken a lot out of him. Link felt as if he was rowing through molten steel.

"Oh, you should probably stir it a bit faster. Also, you should focus on stirring in a spiral. Yes, that's it. You sure are a lot better at this than any Apocalypse Dragon Guard."

Link was panting at this point. He had thought about magically enchanting the crystal rod to stir itself, but Gretel had said that any use of magic would affect the mixture's medicinal properties and that he would need to stir it with his bare hands.

With that said, Link was forced to work until he could barely feel his hands.

As he stirred with all his strength, Gretel stood on the other side of the cauldron, regulating the intensity of the fire beneath it. At times, she would sprinkle a pinch of herbs into the mixture.

After that, she poured a huge bowl of golden-colored herbs, which she called "Searing Sun Herb," into the cauldron. She then said to Link, "Stir it faster, yes, keep it that way... Don't let your sweat drip into it. Yes, that's it."

Link kept on stirring according to Gretel's instructions.

There was a bubbling sound from within the cauldron, and he could see the mixture within begin to thicken. The Searing Sun Herb had dissolved completely into it, and slowly, the mixture began to shimmer with a jade-green color. At the same time, a pleasant fragrance wafted from the cauldron.

The noses of the children around them unconsciously twitched at the smell.

Gretel's face brightened at the concoction's change. "That's it, the texture's turning out nicely. Don't stop stirring, Link."

Link soldiered on. It was a good thing the Dragon Power within his body was able to repair any bodily injury almost instantaneously. Otherwise, he would have crippled both his arms at this point.

After stirring for more than an hour, no more than a tenth of the jade-green liquid was left in the cauldron. It had changed into a dark green color, and the fragrance was now so pungent it was almost intoxicating.

Gretel began turning down the heat. She then said, "It's almost done. Stir it slowly now. Yes, that's it."

Link did as he was instructed. He continued stirring for half an hour until the liquid within the cauldron was finally condensed into a black capsule no bigger than a dove's egg.

"It's done," said Gretel with a smile. She picked up the capsule from the cauldron, bit off a small chunk off of it, and then gave the rest to Link. "Eat it."

"Why? I'm not the one poisoned here," said Link, confused.

"Eat it, and you'll know why. This isn't just an antidote," said Gretel, smiling knowingly at him.

Link took the other half of the capsule and breathed in its medicinal fragrance. Warily, he chewed a small bit off the capsule. As the antidote dissolved into his saliva and slid down his throat, Link felt a rush of heat enter his stomach and then spread out to all corners of his body.

Immediately after, an in-game message concerning the capsule he had just swallowed appeared before him.

The Red Dragon Queen's Antidote

Quality: Level 11

Description: Neutralizes the Void Centipede's venom, while restoring the user's physical strength. If ingested after undergoing extreme exertion, the drug will repair torn muscles and strengthen the user at the same time.

(Note: Anything made by the Red Dragon Queen is guaranteed to be top quality.)

After reading the message, Link gave the rest of the capsule back to Gretel. "I think you should eat the rest. You're the one who's poisoned. You need it more than I do."

"Idiot." Gretel shook her head, smiling. "I've already calculated the dosage I need. I left the rest of the drug especially for you. Why do you think I deliberately let you stir the mixture just now? It's so that you'll be able to exhaust yourself and later fix yourself up with the medicine. And still, you want to give me your half?"

"I see," said Link. He swallowed the whole thing in one go, and an intense heat flowed through him from his stomach.

The heat was intense, but not overwhelming. Instead, it produced an almost soothing sensation as it boiled through his entire body.

Wherever the heat passed through, it melted away all the exhaustion in that part of his body. A while later, Link was filled with so much energy that he would probably explode at any moment.

The fire within him began to intensify. Link's body felt like a balloon at that moment. More accurately, he felt like a piece of steel being grilled in a pool of lava.

Is Gretel trying to melt me from within? This medicine's a bit too efficacious! he thought. Link could not take the heat anymore. He immediately drew out the Dragon King's Fury sword and rushed into a nearby stream, where he began madly practicing his sword in the water.

Gretel was left speechless when she saw Link taking the whole capsule in one gulp. She had forgotten to tell him to take it in moderate portions.

"He's going to have a hard time," she said.

Gretel carefully popped one small piece of the capsule into her mouth. Her pale face turned crimson in an instant, and her breathing was now steadier than before.



She could clearly feel the icy venom coursing through her body being incinerated by the intense heat from the capsule. Once completely free of the venom, Dragon Power flowed again through her. In a few moments, she had regained more than 1000 Dragon Power points.

Before, she was unable to deal with the Chaotic Rot that Link had sealed up in her body with his Sealing spell. Now, with her Dragon Power, she managed to expel the Rot together with Link's Sealing spell out of her body.

The tainted energy that she had released from her body was so powerful that it probably would have flattened the whole place in a ten-mile radius if not handled properly. When it exited her body, Gretel was careful enough to open a realm portal and direct it out of the realm of Firuman.

When she was done, Gretel heard the swishing sound of Link's sword coming from the nearby stream. She shook her head, chuckling at him. She then let out a sigh with a deep-felt sense of respect and gratitude towards Link.

Many times, she had personally witnessed Link's self-restraint.

He was a reliable person who would not let his emotions get the better of him. She never needed to worry about him messing up any of her requests. He was also extremely diligent. In her 2000 years as the Red Dragon Queen, Gretel had never met anyone like him.

His accomplishments would most likely not stop here. Link would keep on going forward until he had finally surpassed everyone and everything.

It was truly a blessing to all dragonkind to have Link as a Dragon Duke.

Ah, if only I had met you sooner... With Celine in the way, whatever shall I do? thought Gretel, frowning.

She had wanted to have Link all to herself at first. As time passed, the more she knew him, the more she felt that it was impossible to do so. The little fellow was frightfully intelligent at times and rarely made any mistakes.

After thinking for a while, her eyes suddenly widened. "If I can't get to him directly, maybe I can do so through Celine. I may have a chance if Celine agrees to it... alright, I'll do just that!"

...

While Link worked off the excess energy he had received from the antidote, seawater lapped lazily against the white sand of a beach a few hundred miles away. One of the waves receded from the beach to reveal a huge, black fish lying on the sand.

The fish was around two feet long, and its scales were densely packed together. With a closer look, one could see that its scales were covered with countless gleaming runes. As the wave receded, its scales began to transform into a long black robe with golden linings all over. In that robe, the fish had taken on a human form.

Before the next wave came crashing against the sand, the figure in the black robe stood up, and vapor began rising from his body into the air. Before long, he was completely dried from head to toe.

The figure was a 20-year-old man. With a mat of black hair and a fair complexion, his body was slender and almost skeletal-looking.

The man then began walking along the coastline for about ten miles until a simple-looking village appeared before him.

There were a number of large humanoid shapes walking among the wooden huts in the village. Upon closer inspection, one could see that every one of them had the head of a fish on top of their human torsos, while their skins glistened with a sticky fluid like an amphibian's.

Stunned by the appearance of the man in the black robe, they then began shouting and waving their tridents as they rushed at the black-robed man.

With a sinister smile on his face, the man gently waved a hand at the fish people. A ripple appeared in the air like a crystalline wave, bringing up the white sand into the air and sending it crashing down on the fish people like a huge net.

A terrible ripping sound could be heard. More than 200 fish people in the village were bloodily torn apart by the sudden attack, their misshapen bodies now scattered on the sand.

The black-robed man ignored the corpses around him and continued on through the village until he reached a large cage. The cage opened by itself, releasing ten mixed demons imprisoned within.

The mixed demons were already groveling on the floor before him. They all said in unison, "Our almighty messenger of the gods, you've finally come to save us!"

The man nodded. "Thoreau the esteemed one has ordered me to descend to the mortal realm to save his children. Come, follow me as we rid this place of all darkness. I can feel it, the darkness that has taken root in the deeper parts of the island."

With the fish people dead, none of the mixed demons had anything to say about this. "As you wish, great messenger of the gods!"

# Chapter 507

## Time Sword Technique

Whoosh, whoosh.

In the water, a layer of fiery red light emerged on Link's body. The water around him boiled and bubbled, steaming. When he wielded his sword, it left a heavy red afterimage in the air.

He was extremely fast, so the afterimages overlapped around him like a forest of swords. This wasn't enough though.

Link felt that fire was still burning inside him, almost grilling his body. Strangely though, other than feeling bloated, he didn't feel much pain. He could clearly feel the tiny impurities inside him getting burned away.

At the same time, he felt new Dragon Power being born continuously even though his Dragon Power was maxed out. Before, the new power would be used up immediately. He couldn't save it. Now, he could feel clearly that the power remained.

My Dragon Power limit is increasing! Link understood immediately, overjoyed.

He thought of a saying from Firuman. When things are going good, don't try to change anything. Let it keep being good.

This was a wise saying. Link didn't try to change. He kept practicing swordsmanship in the creek. As he practiced, he sank into a very strange and intriguing state. He completely forgot about the fire burning in him and even forgot that he was practicing swordsmanship. He just kept leaping and stabbing in the river, following an instinctive urge.

Whoosh, splash. Water flew in the air.

Hiss, hiss. The sword cut across the sky, whistling through the air.

Translucent droplets of water fell from the sky, only to be halved by the Dragon King's

Fury sword as it passed by. Clear water flowed from the upstream. When it passed Link, it became turbid and rushed downstream.

The water was still water. Nothing had changed except how it flowed.

A phrase popped up in Link's mind: space is water; time is a river.

This was like a key for the lock and a beautifully written essay. Link's mind brightened as if the sun had risen.

A thought rushed through Link's mind like a flood. So this is the essence of time. Space is still water while time is the force pushing the water. The two complement each other. They are two of the same entity... I see now! I see!

Understanding the time book from this angle, Link realized that all his confusion dissolved instantly. A vast golden avenue opened up before him.

At this time, he still had questions about time, but he was sure that he knew how to advance. He wasn't baffled anymore.

Fire kept burning his body so he couldn't stop his sword practice.

As he practiced, the time knowledge that he'd just came up with, the theories he had from before, and even the techniques he was practicing now slowly mixed together. This feeling was strange. Even Link didn't know what exactly was going on. He didn't even think; the knowledge mixed automatically.

Now, Link's mind was like a furnace while all the knowledge was boiling metal.

Dragon Power started burning in Link's mind, supplying the energy for his thinking. But Link's mind kept using up more and more energy. Finally, even the fast recovery rate couldn't make up for the consumption.

The Dragon Power inside him gradually depleted. Even the fire weakened and eventually extinguished.

After who knew how long, Link felt something explode in himself. He pierced forward furiously.

Snick. He'd stabbed a tree.

This sound woke Link up. He focused his eyes and looked forward. He'd come to the riverbank without realizing, and he'd stabbed through a big tree.

He could have done this easily before, but he soon realized that this stab was different.

After stabbing the tree, a 20-centimeter radius around the hole was all rotten. Link softly retracted the sword. With a soft puff, the rotten parts transformed into a fine powder and flowed down. A wide hole gaped open.

Strange. Link walked over and picked up some powder. He rolled it in his hand. The powder turned into something like ashes and blew away in the wind.

He sniffed his hand. The powder smelled a bit like rotten wood.

What kind of power is this? Link found it strange. Dragon Power couldn't create this effect. He hadn't used any spells either, and the powder didn't have any magic aura.

After a moment, Link thought back to how it felt when he stabbed forward. He stabbed the tree again. When the sword was midway through, the strange feeling came again. It felt like something in his body flowed into the Dragon King's Fury sword, surrounding it.

Shtick. Again, he stabbed through the tree without using any power. It was as easy as slicing tofu. Another decayed ring of 20 centimeters appeared around the hole, just like before.

Weird, so weird. Since when do I have this kind of power? What exactly is it that can cause such a strange effect?

Just as Link was utterly confused, his vision flashed. He glanced at it.

Player created a new time battle technique, +300 Omni Points. Please name this battle technique.

Time battle technique? Link couldn't figure it out. "Explain battle technique," he said.

His vision displayed some text.

Unnamed Battle Technique

Above Level-12 (Power changes according to the amount of Dragon Power inputted)

Cost: Minimum 3000 Dragon Power points (no maximum)

Effect: Activated the time essence within Dragon Power and feeds it into a weapon. All targets of the weapon will undergo the "pass of time" effect. The nearby area will instantly move 100,000 years into the future.

(Note: Only time is invincible!)

This description stunned Link. He checked the decayed layer around the hole in the tree. Was the gray-white powder the result of the passage of time?

Link was both shocked and happy. He saw rocks in the surroundings. He walked over and activated the time battle technique again.

Poof. The rock was sturdy, but the moment the sword hit it, it weathered crazily, and Link stabbed through it easily.

Link walked over to check. He discovered that everything around the stone had turned into soft dirt. He could easily crush it in his hands.

It's not very strong towards nonliving organisms. It's not even as strong as a Level-4 spell. But to living organisms, it's fatal!

What kind of creature could survive 100,000 years? If a god didn't fight back, they might suffer too.

Interested, Link went to stab another tree. This time, he couldn't activate the battle technique. It wasn't that he wasn't good at it. He'd just used up all his Dragon Power.

Three moves had used up all his power. This consumption was crazy.

Link then checked his own stats.

Link Morani (Dragon Duke)

Level-11

Current Dragon Power Recovery Rate: 45 points per second

Dragon Power Limit: 16500 points

Current Dragon Power: 1500 points

His upper limit had increased 2000 points with the potion. It was great.

Link was very satisfied and started brainstorming what to call the battle technique. After a while, he said, "Since it uses time, it's a battle technique, and I use a sword, let's call it the Time Sword."

Naming complete. Player now possesses the Time Sword!

Link was satisfied with this powerful sword technique. Seeing how he was covered in mud and water, he cast a cleaning spell and started for the castle.

At the door, Link saw Gretel. She'd recovered her power already.

"Should we leave the island now?" Link asked. They didn't know where exactly they were now, but this island had unknown dangers and the Evil God Thoreau. Leaving would definitely be better.

With their speed, they could fly towards somewhere and circle the Firuman Realm within half a day. There were no worries about getting lost.

Gretel nodded. After thinking a bit, she gave a Dragon Power seed to all the kids. Gazing at the beautiful castle, she said sadly, "I'll miss this pretty house."

"Your Majesty... Tellie, if you want, I can build you a new one in the Dragon Valley," Link said, chuckling.

Gretel laughed. "Okay, don't forget."

Then Link walked forward. The power of the Void Walk extended and brought them both into the sky. They flew to the sea.

Twenty minutes later, they could see the coast. The beach and sea were before them, and everything looked normal, but Link stopped.

"The island is locked," he whispered.



Gretel discovered this too. The sea was blue and seemed normal, but she could clearly feel that the air was filled with runes.

"The runes are quite powerful, probably above Level-14. If we keep flying, we'll run into great pressure," Link said.

"Can you fly higher?" Gretel asked.

Link tried. When he was around 1.5 miles in the air, he stopped again. "I can't. It's seamless."

"He discovered us?" Gretel asked. Link naturally knew that she was talking about Thoreau.

"I'm afraid so. I think the god's messenger will appear soon too." Link didn't choose the trouble; the trouble chose him.

# Chapter 508

## Thoreau the Soul Devourer

On the beach of the mysterious island

"How is it? Can you break the spatial rune?" asked Gretel.

On the beach, Gretel reclined on a chair magically sculpted with sand, basking under the sun. As Link had already far surpassed her on the subject of spatial magic, she chose not to interfere with his work.

Link carefully observed the transparent runes carved into the space on the other side of the beach. A long while later, he nodded. "I can break it, but I may need half a day to do so, and I fear our opponent would not be so generous as to give us that much time."

As soon as he broke the rune, whoever cast it in the first place would surely come for them. The island was the enemy's territory; both Link and Gretel may not be his equal here.

"What should we do then?" asked Gretel, though she did not seem flustered. Judging from Link's calm demeanor, Gretel assumed that he must have some sort of plan up in his sleeve.

Link paced in circles on the beach. Finally, he said, "The longer we wait, the more prepared our opponent will be on this island. Since he's deliberately locked us in here, we'll just have to force him to come to us."

Gretel immediately understood what he meant. She said, laughing, "Sounds like a great plan. Then break the seal, while I'll wait for him to come here."

Link nodded and pulled out the Dragon King's Fury sword. From the sword's tip radiated a red light, which then pierced the air in front of him.

He had begun the rune-breaking process, but his intention was not to actually break the magical seal but rather to draw the enemy out.

Eight minutes later, a rune had crumbled, and a crack formed on the rune formation. The surrounding runes began to glimmer and align themselves back in place. In an instant, the crack was closed back up again.

A crack caused by the rupture of one rune could be healed up without any problem. If ten or a hundred or even a thousand of those runes were to break at the same time, the resulting crack could be irreparable.

Five minutes later, a second rune crumbled. A crack then closed itself up just as quickly as it had reappeared.

After breaking those two runes, Link felt that he had enough practice. He then proceeded to break a rune at two-minute intervals, but there were just too many runes covering the whole island. Just chipping away at a few runes would not affect the whole thing, and the whole magic seal around the island remained as sturdy as before.

But this was only temporary.

Though the rune formation seemed perfect, after losing ten or so runes, a few places on it had begun showing discordance. All he needed to do was to keep on breaking the runes till everything collapsed.

When Link had broken through more than 50 runes, Gretel, who had been lazily lounging on the beach all this time under the sun and sea breeze, suddenly sat up. "He's coming!"

Link nodded and continued his work. "He's a bit slower to react than I had expected. If he were any slower, I would have been done with the whole rune formation."

In case the enemy had not yet noticed the state of his magic seal, Link did not stop breaking the runes. On the other side, Gretel stood up, and her body began swirling with a bright light. In a flash, the light condensed into a gleaming dragon-scaled battle dress on her. She held in her hand an elegant-looking one-handed sword. The weapon itself emanated a soft red glow, indicating that it too was a legendary weapon.

Link looked at her, somewhat surprised. "Your Highness, you can use a sword?"

Gretel smiled. "I've learned many things in the past 2000 years. Though I don't normally use a sword, I might just be better at it than you."

"Maybe." Link chuckled.

At that moment, a black spot had appeared in the sky. A few seconds later, the black spot expanded into the figure of a man with a black robe billowing around him. Another ten seconds later, the figure was already within 300 feet away. He hovered in mid-air, and a voice came from him. "Ah, I seem to have caught two dragons. Today's catch has certainly exceeded all my expectations."

Link looked up and saw an extremely beautiful young man in the air. He was wearing a black magic robe with golden linings. With black hair and white, almost flawless skin, he was a beauty to behold by human standards. However, Link was not concerned with his looks. He intently felt for his opponent's aura which was almost imperceptible.

This meant that his opponent was probably two levels higher than Link.

Link glanced at Gretel. "He's strong."

Gretel's face was now tautened with alertness. She nodded, and began focusing Dragon Power into her magic sword, getting herself ready for battle.

The young man spoke again. "Truth be told, I did not expect such an extravagant catch. Your souls do seem powerful. By absorbing your souls, I'll possess both your strength and knowledge. My understanding of the laws governing this world will reach heights never before imagined by anyone, not even I!"

Hearing this, Link's brows furrowed. He asked, "Are you Thoreau, the Esteemed One?"

The man was preparing to devour their souls. It was not something a god's messenger would do, as all souls belonged to whatever god he or she served.

In the game world, the island was part of a hoax, and the character known as Thoreau had done much evil under the guise of dispensing justice. Using this knowledge, Link was able to deduce the stranger's identity.

The black-robed young man was stunned by how quickly his identity had been discovered. He then shook his head, sighing. "I had expected no less from a Legendary master. Nothing gets by you, eh?"

He remained in the air without moving an inch, as he said, "Yes, you guessed right, I'm

Thoreau. 1000 years ago, I spent countless hours and energy creating this island. I've even brought together the mixed races exiled from the outside world to flourish here and reproduce. As they reproduced generation after generation, the souls of their deceased nourished me, making me stronger. When the island becomes a bit too populated, I'll appear as a demon before them and bring their numbers down to an acceptable level. Through this cycle of life and death, my power has surpassed its limits twice. Haha, isn't my plan just glorious?"

"Despicable," said Gretel. "You're devouring souls for nourishment. What you're doing is against nature itself, and you'll soon answer for your crimes against it!"

Thoreau cackled. "My crimes against nature? No, no, no, the only rule governing all life in the realm is survival of the fittest. As long as I'm strong and careful enough, no one and nothing will be able to punish me for my actions."

Saying this, he turned towards Gretel and smiled. "Judging by your good looks and power, you must be the Red Dragon Queen. No other creature in all of Firuman possesses such faultless beauty. If you're willing to give up your power to me, I'll promise to spare your life and let you stay by my side. What do you think?"

Gretel shook her head. "You must be out of your mind."

Thoreau heaved a sigh. "Seems like you've not yet understood your place here. Right now, I'm the hunter, and both of you are my prey. I'm the one holding sway over your very fates, while you don't get to decide anything."

When he had finally finished gloating, a magic wand suddenly appeared in his hand. The wand was a dark golden color with a blue gemstone fixed on its tip. As soon as the wand appeared, the whole sky shimmered with an azure blue haze. At the same time, the waves began exploding against the beach. The water level rose, and it seemed as if a tsunami was about to happen.

This was a Legendary-level phenomenon.

Thoreau said with a low voice, "I've spent 300 years making this wand, and it's already close to perfection. In all these years, I've never met any prey worthy of my full strength. But now, both of you will have that honor!"

At the appearance of the magic wand, Link heard the spirit of the Dragon King's Fury sword warning him in his mind, "Careful, I know that wand. It's the Sea God's Fury

wand!"

The game system instantly reacted to the mention of the wand's name by revealing its in-game message.

The Sea God's Fury wand, the Scepter of the Tidal Summoner

Legendary Mid-level (14)

Description: Greatly amplifies all water spells, the dream weapon of any Water Magician.

(Note: If you happen to come across the wand's user in the ocean, run for your life!)

Reading this, Link was able to immediately devise a countermeasure. He said to Gretel, "It's an extremely powerful water-based magic wand. We shouldn't be fighting him near the ocean."

Saying this, Link winked at her, implying that there was more to his words than met the eye.

## Chapter 509

# Not Even 10,000 Tricks Can Stop the Pass of Time

At the beach

In this world, if you gave your heart to someone, you'll be able to sense even their smallest movements.

To Gretel, Link was that someone. In her more than 2000 years of life, other than her mother who'd passed away, Link was the person she was most familiar with.

She felt Link blink. Jolting slightly, she understood what Link meant. That sentence was said to lower the opponent's guard. His ulterior motive was to unleash a fatal kill while the other was relaxed and listening to his words.

The corners of Gretel's lips curled upward. Understood.

Link caught this small movement too. He knew that Gretel understood his motive and started preparing to act.

Thoreau didn't discover the secret exchange. He was feeling proud that Link complimented his wand. "You aren't blind, at least. But unfortunately—"

Before he could finish, Link moved abruptly. He stabbed his Dragon King's Fury out. Halfway there, the tip flashed with crystal-red light. He'd activated the Demon Slayer Whip.

A thin crystal-red streak flashed and whipped towards Thoreau's head. It was so fast that it reached within 60 feet of Thoreau within one-tenth of a second. It instantly went for the kill.

Because of Link's previous words, Thoreau had subconsciously guessed that Link would use this action to move the battlefield. He sneered. "Nice calculations but it's useless to me. Crystal Waves!"

Whoosh! A ring of transparent ripples appeared around him. It was only as tall as him

at first and spread out with him as the center. Three feet away, it turned into a huge wave. After another three feet, the wave turned into a tide. Sand and pebbles tossed in its path. The crystal wave entirely covered Thoreau.

An instant later, it crashed into Link's Demon Slayer Whip.

Hiss. Water and fire clashed and white steam rose up. Link's Demon Slayer Whip snaked through the crystal-like wave, trying to attack the spell-caster behind it.

But the waves seemed to be endless. The Demon Slayer Whip kept bursting forward and evaporating the waves. It even created a hole more than six feet wide in the waves. But after 15 feet, it used up all its energy.

Poof. Link's flame extinguished.

His fire law was around the same level as the law in the Crystal Wave. However, the difference in scale of the spell was too large. Thoreau was the victor in this direct clash of spells.

"Haha, taste the power of the sea!" Thoreau's roar traveled from behind the endless waves. His voice rumbled like thunder.

Link had lost in the fight of water against fire. But he wasn't alone.

"Burning Dragon Breath!" Gretel yelled.

She pointed her magic sword at the incoming waves. A dark purple pillar of firelight rushed forward. Halfway there, the pillar transformed into a dragon in flight.

An instant later, there was a huge boom. The dragon of light snuck into the hole in the crystal waves that Link's whip had created.

Thoreau's crystal waves had a large scale but, to defend Link's traceless Demon Slayer Whip, he'd chosen a ranged attack. He wasted a whole lot of energy. Gretel's spell, on the other hand, was a targeted attack and had the advantage created by the Demon Slayer Whip. With these two together, water and fire came to a tie.

With a boom, white steam rose up and firelight shot in all directions. A huge hole gaped open in the horrible wall of water.



Now!

Link was waiting for this. He instantly activated the battle technique Instant Flash.

His figure blurred and the next moment, he was beside the black-robed man. He stabbed his sword forward with the Time Sword technique he'd just acquired. He also added in 10,000 Dragon Power points.

He put his all into this attack. If he didn't succeed, he would be dead.

With this stab, time passed and 100,000 years flew by!

This attack was so abrupt. As a battle technique, there was also no need to construct a Mana structure. Thus, it operated so fast the opponent had no time to react at all.

Thoreau was surprised. His spell had gone against Gretel, and his power was delayed. It was completely beyond his expectation that Link would be able to cast such a fatal attack. He was still a Level-13 Legendary Magician though. As his thoughts flowed, his body faded. He turned into a ball of white mist that flew back quickly.

While escaping, crystal needles appeared in the air around him. They pierced towards Link.

If Link didn't dodge them, he would turn into a pin cushion.

If he kept stabbing his sword forward like this, he would miss. But he didn't change his movement. His sword kept going but midway through, the white mist was 300 feet away. It transformed back into a human while the crystal needles were right before Link, about to stab through him.

"Despair!" A light ball with a black vortex within appeared at the tip of Link's sword. The tip buried into the ball. He still ignored the crystal needles.

"Dragon Scale Barrier!" It was Gretel; she cast a defense spell for Link. A thick magic shield appeared before Link. It was a Level-11 spell.

Ding, ding, ding, ding. There were consecutive crashing sounds. White crystal shards appeared on the surface of the ten-centimeter-thick red scale-like shield.

Thoreau had hurriedly released this spell while Gretel was prepared, so she had the

advantage.

The same moment, Link's sword appeared behind Thoreau. This move was still as abrupt as before. He'd just re-solidified and was caught off guard. Link's sword ended up stabbed into his back.

"Vaporize!"

As someone who'd reached Level-13 with his own abilities, Thoreau was truly powerful. The instant the sword entered his body, his back turned into vapor. He'd dodged the fatality of that attack. Then the light of vaporization extended to the rest of his body and he escaped again.

He couldn't help it. He'd miscalculated and was forced into a disadvantage. His every move after that worsened it. Every second was spent at the brink of death. This was unexpected too.

Now, he finally understood that Link hadn't planned on moving the battlefield. He'd been preparing to just end the battle!

Link reacted quickly. Seeing that Thoreau had vaporized again, he swept the Dragon King's Fury horizontally.

Boundless Sharpness!

This effect had been raised to the highest level. It could even cut through the causal loop of time, let alone white mist. The blade started tearing apart the mist's structure.

If it was just the mist getting torn apart, Thoreau wouldn't get hurt. He could quickly reconnect after that. However, Link's sword also had the power of time.

Time flew by. One hundred thousand years passed in an instant!

The Dragon King's Fury first broke through the white mist. Then the broken mist traveled through time, passing millenniums instantly. No elemental spell in this world could last for more than one day, let alone millenniums.

So in the time's path, the spell quickly ended, revealing the flesh body. After a while, the flesh turned into black fish scales and white flesh. The fish body then started decaying until it finally turned to ash.

Poof. Link cut the white mist into two with his sword. As the sword passed by, gray-white ashes flew to the side. No matter how powerful one's spell was, it couldn't survive the passage of time.

The broken white mist rapidly turned into two bodies. Link had cut through the body's chest, halving it.

"Ah!" The black-robed Thoreau fell to the ground. He wasn't a human anymore—he was a giant black-scaled fish!

Link didn't give him any chance to fight back. He stabbed again, and the Despair Ball appeared. He was going to end this guy once and for all.

Poof. But Thoreau didn't die and even cast a spell. Half of his body turned into white mist again. Then it transformed into a white flash of light, escaping with incredible speed.

Link's sword was only met with white mist. He didn't have much Dragon Power left, so he couldn't activate the Time Sword battle technique. He couldn't damage the white mist either.

With this delay, the mist escaped to the sea and jumped in, disappearing in the water. The sea was boundless. There was no way to pursue him now.

Only two items were left on the beach. One was half of Thoreau's fish body. The other was his wand, the Sea God's Fury. After Thoreau's escape, peace resumed on the surface of the water. Light kept flowing in the air around the island. It was the rune array.

The runes in the sky cracked and disappeared, one by one. The shackles around the island disappeared completely.

Gretel walked over. Studying the cut on Thoreau's remaining body, she gasped, "Link, your sword is so powerful."

Before this, she'd thought that it would be a bitter battle. In the end, Link only stabbed his sword once, and Thoreau couldn't even resist it. A Level-13 Legendary Magician was forced to flee from just one of Link's attacks.

Link felt for his Dragon Power. He had pretty much used up all of it for this attack, so

he didn't feel any pride in that. He chuckled wryly. "There's a thin line between victory and defeat. If I were by myself, I wouldn't be his match."

There were countless powerful heroes in this big world. By far, he wasn't powerful enough.

Gretel didn't mind. "Alright," she laughed. "He's an old creature that has been alive for who knows how long. How old are you? When you're his age, you can kill him with just the wind from your sneeze."

As she spoke, she picked up the Sea God's Fury wand. She studied the blue gem at the tip and gasped. "Hey, why do I think this is a meteorite? Link, come look. This is something good."

# Chapter 510

## A Piece of Water Meteorite

Link walked over to take a closer look.

From afar, he had thought the brilliant azure gemstone was spherical. Upon a closer look, Link noticed that there were a few bumps on its surface. There were also no runes carved into it. It simply looked like a polished rock.

Link took out the purple meteorite fragment that had re-solidified and tapped the azure gemstone gently with it. He then scratched the gemstone's surface with one of the meteorite fragments' sharp edges but could not seem to even leave an impression on it.

"It's extremely hard!" Link exclaimed.

The meteorite in his hand was hard enough to leave a scratch on any Level-10 material. It could even slice through metal plates with ease.

Not only was the meteorite fragment unable to leave a mark on the gemstone, but the latter also did not seem to have any evidence of magical tampering on it. This suggested that the gemstone's origin was far from ordinary.

What was worth noting was the fact that the wand and the gemstone on it were based on the water element, and water gemstones usually had a high resistance towards high temperatures.

After thinking for a while, Link said, "Since I'm still looking for a suitable dampening material, why don't we just take apart the wand? I don't think I would have much use for it."

Gretel did not object to this. "Go ahead."

Compared to the gemstone on it, the rest of the wand was merely scrap wood. Link drew out the Dragon King's Fury sword and cut the wand in two. Without its wooden support, the azure gemstone fell off from the wand.

As soon as he got the gemstone, Gretel suddenly said to him, "With Thoreau defeated, there's nothing keeping us here on the island. What do we do now once we get back to the castle?"

Link paused for a moment, then said, "The island lacks the resources and facilities that we need to work on the dampening material, and there's also the problem of the spatial crack outside the Dragon Valley..."

This was certainly a problem none of them could avoid.

"Not to worry, I've thought it through," said Gretel with a smile. She extended her hand and shook the dark green bracelet on her wrist. "See this?"

Link looked at it and saw that the bracelet's design was almost primitive. The enchantments on it were like nothing he had ever seen. Looking at it even more closely, Link realized that he could only discern less than half of the enchantments used on it.

"What is this?" Link had noticed the bracelet on Gretel's wrist before, but since it was her personal property, he did not ask too much about it.

"The Dragon King's Bracelet passed down from ancient times. If anything were to happen to Dragon Valley, this bracelet would notify us of it, and I can even bring you back with me through long-distance teleportation."

Link was left speechless. If she had been able to teleport them out of the island all this time, why didn't she use it before?

Gretel smiled awkwardly at him. "I wasn't able to activate the bracelet's long-distance teleportation skill as I was not at my full strength before. Also, I can only use this skill once a month. Since Dragon Valley seems to be fine at the moment, I thought that I might as well save it for an actual emergency."

Her explanation had sounded reasonable to Link, but still, he sensed that there was something off about it, as if Gretel had left out some other details.

Seeing Link's ruminative state, Gretel continued, "Though Thoreau had escaped with severe injuries, if we were to leave this island, he may come back to continue devouring the souls of the island's inhabitants. There are at least three million people living here."

Link nodded, finally convinced by Gretel. "Alright then, we'll start work on the dampening material here. It shouldn't take us too long."

"Hehe, then let's get back. Honestly, the castle has kind of grown on me. Also, there's no one else to bother us here..." Her voice trailed off into a mumble, and Link could not hear what she said at that point.

The two of them chatted on as they flew towards the castle. Far out in the ocean, a column of mist was steadily rising from the ocean's surface. It was Thoreau the soul devourer, whose body had been split in half by Link.

His injury was so severe that he could only keep his body in a mist-like state. If he were to restore his body back to its original form, his severely crippled state would not be able to contain his own soul. He would immediately die from the process.

No, I need to find a new body, he thought. Seeing the two Legendary dragons flying back to the island, Thoreau immediately dismissed the idea of going back to the island and consuming the souls of the island's inhabitants in order to replenish his power.

He swam further into the ocean in search of a suitable body for his soul.

He remained in his mist-like state as he swam. The spell was extremely taxing, and he did not have much time left. Even though the ocean was filled with all kinds of sea life, their bodies were too weak to bear the weight of his Legendary soul.

After searching for half an hour in the ocean, just when it looked as if his power was about to run out, a black-scaled swordfish appeared in front of him. Its appearance was almost similar to his physical body, and its power level was at most Level-7, which should be just enough to contain his soul.

Though Thoreau was not too pleased with his available options, he was running out of time and power. Reluctantly, he rushed into the black-scaled swordfish's body.

In an instant, the fish ceased all movement. Its fins began thrashing about wildly; its whole body trembling uncontrollably as if it was being electrocuted. Ten minutes later, a blue glow filled the swordfish's eyes.

Thoreau had successfully taken control of his new body. He waved a fin and wiggled his body, closely feeling the power in him that flickered like a candle in the wind. He then heaved a long sigh.

"I'm left with Level-8 power. My body's suffered serious damage, and I've lost my magic wand. Years of effort gone down the drain like that... Well played, dragons. From now on, you are now my sworn enemies!"

Though he had lost most of his power, Thoreau had enough experience as a Level-8 Magician. He would not need to spend a thousand years to regain what he had lost.

"If I'm lucky, I'll be back to my full Legendary power in a year or two. I can't go back to the island now, but I can still head for the coast of the Firuman continent. There are a lot of boats passing by the coastline, and the soul of a mortal sailor on board should be a few times stronger than a fish. This way, I'll be able to return to my former glory in no time."

With this in mind, Thoreau swished his new tail and propelled himself away from the island that he had built with his own bare hands, towards the continent of Firuman in the west.

...

The castle on the island

Link and Gretel finally returned to the castle. After resting for the whole day, they then began puzzling over how best to forge a dampening material that could withstand high temperatures.

It took Link three days to produce his Level-20 experimental magic circle.

In that time, Gretel had begun her experiments with samples they had retrieved from the Sea of Void, including the purple meteorite, the azure gemstone, and the Void Centipede's stinger, to test their alchemical properties.

When Link was finally done with the magic circle, he then proceeded to construct a number of alchemical equipment. That took him another two days. When he was finished, Gretel had already come up with a concrete alchemical procedure for their objective.

She then explained her plan to Link, "I'll combine all these things together to produce a totally new piece of material. It will have the property to withstand high energy levels, but according to my estimations, it will only be able to resist Level-18 power."



Link frowned at this. "There's quite a difference between Level-18 and Level-20, you know."

Though it was only a two-level difference, the last two levels after Level-18 were the most difficult stages to reach, especially Level-20, which existed in another realm entirely.

Pondering on this for a while, Link said, "Let's put it aside for now. Start making the Level-18 material, and we'll think of something to improve on it along the road."

Gretel nodded, then said, "The alchemical process is extremely complicated. I don't think I'll be able to handle it on my own. I'll need your help in it as well. You'll probably need to master the basics of alchemy. Don't worry, I'll be the one guiding you through it."

Link did not seem to have a choice on this matter. He said, "Alright then, let's get started!"

Gretel then began teaching Link alchemy.

Alchemy was essentially a huge branch of magic. Gretel was a master in alchemy, while Link was a master in magic. Both stood on the pinnacles of their respective fields.

Everything and everyone else seemed so small from where they stood.

Link listened attentively to Gretel's alchemical teachings and was able to rapidly absorb all that he was taught. His skill in alchemy improved in leaps and bounds.

Half a month later, Link's alchemical skill had surpassed 99.9 percent of the alchemists living on the continent.

Of course, there was still a small gap between Link's current level and Gretel's.

One day, he was carrying out an experiment according to Gretel's instructions, when suddenly, an alchemical inspiration popped out of nowhere in his mind.

He was stunned for a moment, completely forgetting his work in front of him. Ten seconds later, the mixture in the magic cauldron before him began to boil violently. There was an explosion later, and the soup within the cauldron was splattered all across the alchemical laboratory.

Gretel had heard the explosion and immediately came into the laboratory from a room nearby. She saw that Link was radiating with the glow of a defensive spell, and the rest of the laboratory was all but destroyed.

"What happened?" Gretel did not understand how Link could have made such an explosive error.

Hearing the explosion, Link's eyes came back into focus and groggily stared at Gretel. "I suddenly thought of a way to increase the level of the end-product all the way to Level-19.

"Impossible!" Gretel shook her head. "I've already thought of every possible alchemical process. With the materials we have currently in hand, the highest we can reach is only Level-18."

Even an alchemy master such as herself could not achieve such a feat. How was a novice like Link able to do such a thing? She refused to believe that he had surpassed even his own teacher!

# Chapter 511

## Link's Enduring Wisdom

The inspiration in Link's mind was fleeting like a swimming fish. He wanted to catch it, but it just kept swimming around, wriggling out of his hands.

Gretel was doubtful, but Link couldn't explain it. He chased the shred of light in his mind while instinctively mumbling, "Wait, wait, let me think."

Gretel didn't really believe him, but she didn't interrupt his thoughts either. She started gathering the shards on the ground with her Magician's Hand.

Link looked at the liquid and shards all over the ground. The inspiration ran back. It was much clearer now, but when Link tried to say it out loud, he couldn't figure out how to explain it.

After thinking a bit, he decided to take out his magic notes. He strode over to a window and went to work.

At first, Link just wanted to calculate the specific alchemy Mana. As he wrote, his thoughts followed the guidance of that shred of inspiration and floated to a very strange territory.

The process started off very difficult. Link pushed forward bit by bit, feeling like he was walking in mud. Each step was agonizing as if something was dragging him down. It was practically impossible to move, but he still forged on.

Slowly, the obstructing mud disappeared. The road became smoother and broader. Naturally, Link started walking faster too.

Beside the "road," Link also saw many tools. This was all the knowledge that he already possessed, including enchantment methods, spatial spells, dragon spells, and even the power of time.

Since they were tools, Link started using them to open up the path ahead. Thus, Link began walking faster and faster on this road that he forced open. He ignored

everything that happened around him.

He'd instantly forgotten about the outside world.

Gretel finished cleaning up the alchemy room. Seeing Link like this, she waited for a bit. But after he sank deeper into his thoughts, she realized that she couldn't keep waiting.

At that time, she heard some noise outside the castle. Walking to the window, she saw people coming from the town again.

She went out and looked down from the city walls to see the demon elder with around 30 other mixed demons.

The residents of the small town were all mixed-horned demons. But amongst the dozens, there were mixed succubae, demon-elves, mixed-oxen beasts, mixed Beastmen, demon-dragons and all sorts of strange "mutts."

When the elder saw Gretel, he immediately knelt down and exclaimed, "Mighty messenger, they are all pilgrims. When they heard that you came to the mortal world, they wanted to see a bit of your glory."

Thud, thud. The others fell to their knees when they saw Gretel and started praising her with reverant words.

Gretel wasn't surprised by this. She and Link had been here for almost half a month, and the news must have spread. Though the true messenger had appeared, he was forced to fight Link quickly and probably didn't have time to spread his influence. Since news of the god's messenger had spread and the real one was kicked out, she and Link became the true messengers.

Oh, if that Thoreau knew about this, he'd probably get a heart attack. Gretel wanted to laugh. All these people on the island saw them as God's messenger. If they could take advantage of this, it would be a giant force.

But they're all mixed. They're far from demons, but they're too ugly. It'll be hard for mainlanders to accept them. I wonder how Link will take care of this.

Gretel's thoughts were definitely more open than those dragon elders. She knew the situation of the mainland. Even without the crack in the realm, the God of Destruction

was spying from the darkness. A small mishap could cause a catastrophe. At that time, any possible ally would be valuable.

Thinking of this, Gretel decided to comfort them first.

The pilgrims were all dressed in rags. Many were injured as well. Clearly, the long journey had been hard, but their faces were still full of devout worship. They must be fervent believers.

Gretel waved her hand and cast a dragon healing spell on all of them.

These people were all under Level-5. The dragon healing spell was highly effective, curing all ailments almost instantly. They were all dazed. Then, feeling their bodies, they became ecstatic. They prostrated themselves on the ground and started praising her again.

Finally, Gretel said, "From now on, you are all God's messengers. Go back and spread God's glory. Tell everyone that God's light will soon descend."

"Mighty messenger, praise thee."

"I will not disappoint you."

"May light remain for eternity!"

To show their reverence, they retreated on their knees and kowtowed towards the castle after each step. When they couldn't see the castle anymore, they rose and ran away excitedly to spread the glory.

Seeing that, Gretel just sighed. Thoreau, you really scared them too much. Now, they're willing to give up everything just for the bit of hope.

It was all thanks to Thoreau. Gretel didn't know what secret spell that guy used to live thousands of years. He'd been terrorizing these mortals all this time and ended up creating such a cult-like religion. If this force was unleashed, it would be terrifying. If used correctly, they could even rewrite Firuman's history. Gretel felt that she couldn't ignore this force. She had to use them but had to discuss with Link about how to do it.

Thinking of this, she returned to the alchemy room. Link was still scribbling in his notes though. He didn't even change his posture.

How long will it take this time?

This type of thought process was very valuable. Gretel obviously wouldn't disturb Link; she could only wait.

For the next few days, Link didn't eat, drink, sleep, or even talk. He just fought with his notes. Gretel didn't rest either. She thought about how to upgrade the materials. The demon elder would bring pilgrims over every day. Gretel would meet them and cast a low-level dragon healing spell to everyone, telling them to spread the glory.

Half a month passed like this. Finally, Link walked out of the room holding his magic notes.

Gretel had been waiting. "How is it?" she asked impatiently.

Link was still energetic. He opened his notes and flipped to the conclusion. "There's some good news and some bad news."

"Tell me the good news first."

"With my idea, we can indeed raise a material to Level-19. More accurately, it's Level-19.9, the limit of this realm."

"What's the bad news?"

"I'm now sure that there's no way to raise a material to Level-20 with Legendary power. The Origin is the limit of Legendary power... Perhaps it can reach Level-20 temporarily, but it won't be stable. The material would be destroyed instantly."

"Oh. And the rest of the good news?" Gretel asked.

"The second thing is that even though we can't get Level-20 buffer material, we can use a special magic seal, and Level-19 material would be enough. The cost though is that the magic seal would be reduced to Level-23, not the Level-26 that we predicted."

Gretel wasn't disappointed. "Level-23 is enough."

In the Legendary levels, trying to increase one's level was practically impossible. The Origin was even more so. Level-20 was already like a dream. If Link could create a Level-23 attack, it would be incredible.

Gretel was instantly interested by the idea of the piece of Level-19.9 material that Link mentioned. Disregarding manners, she grabbed Link's notes and started reading.

The notes were messy, dense, and obscure. It was difficult for Gretel to understand at the beginning. Furrowing her brows, she forced herself through.

A painful half an hour later, she suddenly understood Link's thoughts. The reading process became smoother after that. It was like an open road after that. The exquisite wisdom rushed down like a waterfall. The conclusion after the road gave her a hearty feeling.

After reading, Gretel looked up sadly. "Link, how do I repay you for such enduring wisdom?"

This type of material production method was the limit of this realm. It was invaluable; it could become the foundation for any race and be passed down for generations.

# Chapter 512

## Let Time Decide

That's a good question. How should you repay me? Link wondered.

Hearing those words, Link immediately saw an opportunity presenting itself to him. He then chose his words carefully. "Actually, I've been having this idea."

"What is it? Speak." Gretel blinked innocently, her eyes twinkling as she smiled at him.

Link began explaining his idea of propagating Dragon Power and developing Dragon Warriors among the human race. Like Dragon Elder Pettalong, he had been thinking about it himself from the perspective of the dragon race.

When he was finished, the smile on Gretel's face had waned a bit. Neither disagreeing nor agreeing with Link's suggestion, she simply asked, "The cycle of life and death is an inevitable journey all mortals must take. Though they have survived countless catastrophes for generations, aren't they still well off in general?"

The human race had occupied the more prosperous regions of the Firuman continent, and it had the greatest populations among all the other races. As he could find no fault in Gretel's words, Link simply nodded in acknowledgement. However, he sensed that this time, he was not going to get what he wanted.

Gretel then said, "If mortal men were to receive an even greater power after being trained as Dragon Warriors, who knows what manner of catastrophe that might bring to the other races?"

Link was stunned upon hearing this. "I am a human being by birth, perhaps the most respected among my peers. The High Elves schemed still to assassinate me. The Dwarves too are wary of me, and who knows what the Beastmen and their king, whose strength knows no equal, might have in store for me? Every race has a powerful guardian protecting their own interests. Why should the human race be any different?"

One of Gretel's main concerns had always been the balance of the dragon race. Link,



however, was of a different opinion. He had always believed in being more powerful than the other. With enough power in one's hand, the law of the survival of the fittest, indiscriminating and fair in its judgment, would naturally maintain balance and order among the races of the continent.

At this point, a distinct difference in opinion had surfaced between the two of them.

In truth, Link and Gretel never saw things the same way. It was only when Link had expressed his opinion that such a difference was finally brought to light.

Gretel tried to explain herself, "Link you don't understand. Being stronger than everyone else isn't always a good thing, even if you're just trying to defend your own race. As an example, the dragon race had always lived in near secrecy in Dragon Valley. We never felt the need to interfere with the affairs of mortals, and as a result, trouble from the mortal world never came knocking on our doors. This is how we've managed to survive for thousands of years. The fact that the human race has thrived for so long is due to the balance that we have kept in that time. If you do anything to upset this balance, you'll bring only destruction to your kind."

"Only our actions will decide whether destruction will come to us, and as a member of the human race..."

"No, you are a duke of the dragon race!" Gretel raised her voice a little. She then spoke seriously, "Balance and our neutrality has been the dragons' way of life for thousands of years. These two points have been tried and tested by time to be our true path."

The atmosphere between them had become tenser. Link frowned. "What about the spatial crack? And the Void Tyrant?"

"Those were only temporary troubles. They will soon be resolved. Isn't that why you're here with the dragon race?"

At this point, Link sensed that they were not going anywhere with their conversation. Their opinions were just too different.

Gretel had hoped that Link would one day accept his duties as a Red Dragon Duke. But Link never intended to do such a thing. What he wanted was to build a prosperous human city, extend the humans' influence and one day establish their hegemony over all of Firuman. As the humans inevitably took their place on the pinnacle of the realm, he would also be able to gather all the necessary resources and materials to further

his research on magic.

It was a win-win situation for him and the human race in general.

As for the dragon race, Link found their insistence to adhere to their outdated ways stifling and oppressive. Such a mentality might suit the elderly, but it was certainly not something needed by someone like Link, who craved above all else progress and power.

There was no point in continuing the conversation. Both were Legendary masters, their wills hard as steel. They each had their own ideas about the world around them, and the only thing capable of convincing them otherwise was also the world itself. To them, words meant nothing.

Link finally said, "Your Highness, I take it that you don't agree with me?"

Gretel's face whitened somewhat. She tried to change his mind. "Link, the dragon race exists to protect the realm itself, and you're already a Legendary master. The matters of the mortal realm should best be left for the mortals to decide among themselves."

Link shot back, "Then why do the High Elves have their own Legendary master protecting them? Why do the High Elves have the World Tree? Why do they deserve to live on the Isle of Dawn in peace, while the rest of us get to burn in the fires of war? Are they simply better than the human race?"

"The High Elves live by the rules. Have you seen them overtly starting any war with the other races?"

Link shook his head. "Your Highness, times are changing. There are cracks appearing across the world, and the rise of Mana saturation shows no sign of stopping. We may be witnessing the birth of countless Legendary masters in the coming decades. In such times, we either adapt to them or perish. The dragon race would not be an exception to this rule!"

Right now, the Mana concentration all over the world was 50 percent higher than before. Level-9 masters had been popping up everywhere, and it would not be long before the whole world enters the Legendary realm.

At the same time, Link had seen the rise of talents in every race. Kanorse, Princess Annie, Herrera and Skinorse were among the pinnacles of human talent in this era.

The Beastmen had the three warlords, while the Dwarves had the Mountain Sage and the King of the Mountains.

In the not so distant future, the appearance of even more Legendary masters would come to pass, as attested by the previous game world.

"No, the Legendary realm could not be so easily reached. You're too optimistic about this. It's not solely predicated on the realm's Mana saturation." Gretel shook her head in disbelief.

For more than 2000 years, she had seen far too many dragon masters being stuck at Level-9 Pinnacle for most of their lives, never knowing when they would be able to come out of the standstill they were in.

Past experience had informed her that the Legendary barrier was almost impenetrable. A genius capable of breaking through it would only come by once every few hundred, maybe even thousand, years. The large-scale proliferation of Legendary masters that Link had described was just impossible.

Link was unable to convince her to see his point. Thinking about it for a while, he said to her, "Your Highness, there's no point in arguing about this any longer. I only wish to train a batch of Dragon Warriors among the human race. Why won't you at least consider carrying out a test?"

Gretel fell silent for ten seconds. She finally shook her head. "No, I won't agree to this! I'm the Red Dragon Queen, I'm responsible for the welfare of the dragon race! Dragon Power is the foundation of dragon civilization. I can't just give it out like candy!"

At those words, the whole laboratory immediately fell into a deathly silence.

Link and Gretel were equally strong-willed, befitting their status as Legendary masters. Before, they were able to work together peaceably with each other, as they both shared a common goal. Their viewpoints were now so different that they were beyond all hope of reconciling with one another.

It was not just the fact that Gretel was unwilling to share Dragon Power with the human race; rather, it was the different paths they have chosen to take.

With Dragon Power beyond his grasp, Link would continue looking for other alternatives to empower the human race. He would walk on further in his path. On the

other hand, Gretel insisted still on walking the path of balance. Gradually, the gap between them would widen even more.

The alchemical laboratory remained silent for ten minutes.

At last, Link took out a huge scroll of parchment. He then activated a Copy spell and quickly wrote down his thoughts on it. Half an hour later, when he had finished writing, Link took out the time fragment, two meteorite pieces, and the Void Centipede's stinger, and handed them all over to Gretel. "I've already laid out my designs for the magic circle to repair the spatial crack in the scroll. Bring it back to Dragon Valley. You should probably be able to work out a magic circle with it."

Gretel scanned the scroll thoroughly. She then spoke softly, her eyes lowered. "You're not coming back with me?"

Link nodded. "No, since the Dragon Power is out of my reach, I'll just have to look for some other way to build up the strength of the human race."

He was only a Level-11 Legendary master. This level of power would not let him surpass the realm of Firuman. With the God of Destruction's covetous gaze still on Firuman itself, he needed to develop his power even further.

Gretel fell silent again. Minutes later, she accepted the scroll and a few other items from him. When she put them all away, Gretel warned him again, "Link, the path you're on will lead you only to destruction."

"It may also be lead me to glory," countered Link with a smile.

"With that mentality of yours, you have no right to wield the dragon's body." Gretel softly touched the Dragon King's Bracelet on her wrist. An iridescent ball of light appeared, engulfing her whole hand.

"As the Red Dragon Queen, I'll need to seal your dragon body up. Of course, you can choose to resist and make me fail the sealing process."

Link shook his head. "No need. It's probably a good thing, anyway. This way, Dragon Valley won't be to blame for my actions in the future."

As he spoke, Link took out the black ring on his finger. It was the seal of the dragon duke.

Tears began welling up in Gretel's eyes, and glittering teardrops fell from them. She spoke tremblingly, "You can still run. Why aren't you running? You're a Spatial Magician. I won't be able to catch up to you."

"There's no need." Link shook his head, letting the ball of light melt into his body. He distinctly heard a soft chink from the Heart of the Dragon in his body. His dragonification skill was sealed shut.

At that moment, he bade farewell to his Black Dragon body.

When his dragon body was finally sealed, and he had returned the seal of the dragon duke to the Red Dragon Queen, Link gave her a slight bow and then walked out of the room in large strides.

Gretel looked on as he left the room. She had hoped that Link would stop in his tracks, turn back to her and tell her that he finally understood what she had been trying to say, and that he wished to follow her back to Dragon Valley.

None of that happened. As soon as Link left, there was a sudden spatial shockwave from outside the castle. With the sound of a fiercely howling wind, he was gone.

Gretel felt her legs weaken beneath her. She fell to the ground and began shedding tears like pearls falling from a necklace to the ground.

Oh, ancestors, where did I go wrong? asked Gretel, without expecting an answer from anyone.

Outside the castle, Link flew at top speed from the island. Without putting up any defensive spells around him, Link simply let the wind and waves slap about his body.

A thick layer of ice had condensed on his body as he flew for three hours straight. He had also managed to calm himself down.

He was the lord of Ferde, while Gretel was the queen of the dragon race. Both of them had their own responsibilities and opinions. They would gradually lose their own selves if one were to abide by the whims of the other, and they would be no different from puppets pulling on each other's strings.

It was just unacceptable.

"Let time decide it all."

Link kept on flying until he finally saw the continent in front of him. It was the southern coastline of the Kingdom of Delonga. Shifting his direction slightly, he began flying towards Ferde.

Half an hour later, after flying for more than 700 miles, he had reached Scorched City. He activated an Invisibility spell and descended on the Mage Tower's observatory.

He then sensed that the dragons in Scorched City had all left, probably summoned back by the queen herself.

Link sighed. Today had not gone as he had expected. The fact that he was immediately ostracized upon showing his Black Dragon form for the first time back in Dragon Valley must have been a sign for things to come.

He just did not expect things to take a drastic turn so soon.

Link walked to the edge of the observatory and looked out over Scorched City.

The city had expanded considerably since he was gone. The cluttered state of the area outside the city had visibly improved as well. People and carriages teemed the streets, while chimneys busily puffed up columns of smoke into the air.

It was evening. The golden rays from the setting sun gave everything in the city a yellowed, aged quality, accentuating the vibrancy of the bustling city.

At the moment, he was a Level-11 Legendary master, as well as the protector of this city. The High Elves threatened his domain in the East, the God of Destruction in the North. There was also Morpheus the Shadow Stalker. In the west, there were the warlords of the Beastmen of the Golden Plains, and who knew what other threats lurked in the shadows still.

This was the golden age of heroes and great personages. Link just had a head start over the rest of them.

Tellie, I'm sorry... my beloved, my friends, everything I have is right here in this city. I need to become stronger, I need to continue moving forward. Otherwise, I would have disappointed everyone around me, he thought to himself.

Sighing, Link turned back from the evening view and head back into the Mage Tower.

# Chapter 513

## No Longer a Weakling

Link received from the dragons—mostly from the queen—dragon power, the book Dragon, various dragon spells, and alchemy. He'd lost the thin piece of time but shared a way to create extraordinary material with the queen.

All in all, he didn't lose anything.

But at the end, he forced himself to stay there and let the Red Dragon Queen seal his dragon form. Thinking back, he'd been too headstrong. His dragon form was so useful. It was a pity to lose it like this.

Whatever. What's done is done. No point in regret. Link, look forward! Comforting himself, Link walked into his room at the top of the Mage Tower.

Celine happened to be in that room. She flipped through Link's enchantment book while one slender hand was open on the table. A small Mithril ball hovered above her palm. Under the modification force field, the ball kept changing shape.

She was practicing enchantments.

Link walked to the comfortable chair beside the hall and plopped into it. Celine flinched at the noise. Ripples appeared in her Mana and the Mithril ball instantly wrinkled.

She turned around. Seeing Link, she patted her chest and whined, "I was wondering who it was. I was so scared."

She put down the Mithril ball and walked to sit beside Link. Grinning, she said, "You left for one month. I thought you'd spend the rest of your life with the Red Dragon Queen."

Link shook his head and smiled. He grabbed Celine's small hands and caressed them. "Don't worry, baby," he said, sighing. "I probably won't ever go to the Dragon Valley again."



"What, you destroyed the relationship?" Celine was a bit shocked.

"Something like that. Whatever, let's stop talking about them. Come, tell me what happened in the territory while I was gone."

Celine stopped asking and started reporting to him. Most of it was good news about the territory's construction. This included the Golden Rune Workshop's establishment, which Vance was responsible for. It only enrolled Magic Apprentices now and had many Tutors—more than 100. They'd started producing basic enchantment equipment already.

This was good and of high efficiency. Link was satisfied.

"And there's this." Celine handed a small bag to Link. "Skinorse brought it back for you. He said that he only needs around 30 more so you should prepare his reward."

Link opened it to see a bag full of Jogu. He counted it; there were close to 50. This was a huge gain. With what he already had, he now had more than 70 Jogu. This was great. Link was satisfied too.

"What about news from around the territory?" he asked again. "Such as the Isle of Dawn, the Southmoon Kingdom, the fortress in the North, and such."

Celine cocked her head and thought for a while. She shook her head. "Nothing big. Oh, right, the Syndicate in the South seems to have changed. They got a lot stronger. I heard that the Leo Kingdom has completely been controlled and turned into a puppet."

"Oh, that's really bad news." Link sighed. He knew this was definitely caused by the Ethereal Knights. Morpheus had started preparing the forces to conquer the South.

There were only four kingdoms in the South. Delonga had mostly been annexed by the Southmoon Kingdom. The latter had a good relationship with Ferde, so Link couldn't ignore this.

He quickly thought of something. He cast a large scale life detection spell and quickly found Lucy. Then he used a telepathy spell. "Lucy, it's Link. I need your help."

Lucy was looking over documents and was frightened when she heard the voice. But she quickly collected herself and replied, "Lord, please give me your orders."

"Send a document to Southmoon Kingdom's royalty. Tell them I wish to visit the Grinth Magic Academy in their capital, and they should prepare for it. Then send a small magic ambassador group to spend a few months in Grinth. I'll choose some time to go... Oh, right, have them bring this long-distance communication rune with them."

With that, a crystal-red runestone appeared in Link's hands. It flashed with white light and was sent to Lucy's table.

"Yes, Lord." Lucy collected it and started writing the document.

Having taken care of that, Link felt less worried. He did this to purposely cast doubt. His name was known across the continent now. When the magic ambassador group arrived at Southmoon under the name of a Legendary Magician, this news would spread throughout the southern kingdoms.

The Syndicate would learn of it too. Then they'd have to worry about Link's power if they wanted to wreak havoc in Southmoon. If something really did happen, the ambassador group would send a message with the runestone. He could get to the capital in one hour.

Celine's voice sounded. "Hey, why aren't you talking? What spell did you just use?"

Link chuckled. "A small telepathy spell. I told Lucy to do some things. Alright, now ask me any enchantment questions you have."

"Tsk, look how proud you are!" Celine pouted but still obediently brought her notes over and started asking questions seriously.

Link answered them easily and moved through the dozens of questions Celine had accumulated. Then Celine grasped her notes and ran happily to the enchantment room to try it all out.

Link sat in the room alone, thinking about the future.

First, he still needed to spread some force that could strengthen human Warriors. Pure Dragon Power was out of the question. It wasn't because of their ban; he didn't care about it. It was because he couldn't do it without their help for now. However, he had Dragon Power within him and also their magic books. He could experiment and do research; he believed he could create regular Dragon Power soon.

Once he had a stable Dragon Power seed, he could start spreading it. That was the most important task at hand. Second, if he wanted to turn Scorched City into his main camp, he'd have to create a battle-level magic seal.

Thinking of this, Link decided to create an attack spell that could strike the universe.

In the Firuman Realm, Level-19 was the most powerful. He could create it with a magic seal but couldn't control it perfectly because he didn't have Level-19 material.

He gave the thin piece of time and objects from the Sea of Void to Gretel to guard the spatial crack. Without these, he naturally couldn't create Level-19 material. Without Level-19 material, he couldn't restrain Level-19 power. If any Level-19 force exploded in Ferde, the entire territory would be reduced to nothing. That would suck.

Link collected all the material he had right now. He discovered that he could at most create a Level-15 magic seal.

Fine, Level-15 is good enough. Currently, other than Morpheus, this power can destroy any existence in this realm.

With this magic seal, things like Bryant forcing into his territory wouldn't happen anymore. No matter how strong one was, they'd have to surrender at Ferde!

Since he had the idea, he would start. Link immediately began designing.

This magic seal would naturally be set in the Mage Tower. It should use beams for attack and add the power of time. Without the thin piece of time, he couldn't use fate. He would have to use predictive attacks.

This way, it would be hard for the opponent to escape once targeted.

The attack range should be long enough. Since it was a magic seal, the spell should be as complicated and detailed as possible. Taking advantage of spatial magic's focus, it should reach a maximum of two miles on a good day. This could protect the entire Scorched City.

Finally, the attack shouldn't be largescale. Otherwise, the shockwaves could destroy everything. The spell should be as thin as a needle and just be fatal with one hit.

Link thought and designed; the magic seal came into existence under his pen.

...

While Link was focused on magic in his territory, in the Orida Fortress, Kanorse received a letter from a scout from the Black Forest. He was training in the field when he got the letter. He stuck his Lion's Fury sword into the ground and unfurled the small scroll.

After a few glances, his body trembled. His eyes grew serious.

Turning to the scout who'd brought the letter, he asked, "Are you sure the news of this portal is true?"

"Not sure. There are all types of scouts around the building. We can't get close. There's mist around the entire structure, and it's very hard to see. Princess Annie sent me to alert you while she and the rest try to approach again..."

Hearing this, Kanorse slapped his forehead in worry. "That's too dangerous."

"I said that too. The others tried to dissuade her, but you know Her Highness' temper. She insisted."

Kanorse couldn't do anything. Before, he was a general and could go help with his hot-blooded temper. Now, he was the fortress' supreme commander. He couldn't be so whimsical. Sending reinforcements could alert the enemy too. Thinking it through, he could only wait passively for Princess Annie's news.

He waited for three days. In the dawn of the third day, Princess Annie and five elite scouts rushed out of the Black Forest. Covered in blood, they returned to the Orida Fortress.

She was injured all over, but there was no fear in her face. Instead, she looked excited and proud. Without treating her wounds, she hurried all the way back to the fortress.

Kanorse had gotten the message. He was already dressed and waiting for her. When he saw Annie, he realized her power waves were stronger than before. She'd broken into Level-8 and was close to Level-9.

"Kanorse, it's great that you're here. I got certain news about those Nagas!"

"Really? Is there really a portal?"

Annie nodded. "It's a portal—a large multi-realm portal, in fact. Around it, I saw Wild Beastmen, demons, and many Agatha Nagas."

Kanorse was shocked. "How many?"

Annie gestured with her hands. "More than 150,000."

Kanorse's hands trembled. There were only 50,000 Warriors at the Orida Fortress. The enemy was three times larger. Was the scene with the Dark Army from half a year ago about to be repeated?

What made him curious was that Annie didn't seem nervous at all.

"What else?"

"There are a lot of people, but they're sundry. The Wild Beastmen are the most at 80,000. They have very crude equipment though. They only wear a leather rag and hold sticks. There are only around 20,000 demons, and they don't really follow orders. The Nagas aren't as strong as we predicted either, only around Level-4 and Level-5. They're equal to our elite army, so they're far from the Dark Army from before. They still need to go through a lot of training. We have time to get ready!"

As Annie spoke, her eyes flashed with confidence. The humans were ill-prepared for the Dark Army before. She'd only been a Level-4 Assassin too. They'd been completely squashed. Now, the Orida army wasn't the weak thing from before.

Even the regular Warriors were at Level-3. There were many from Level-4 to Level-6 too and could form an elite army of 10,000 soldiers. The commanders were all above Level-7. There were 15 at Level-8 while Annie was at Level-9. Kanorse was a full-armored Legendary fighter too.

They were all veterans who'd survived the last battle.

From the aspect of individual soldiers and combat ability, they weren't any weaker than their enemy. They also had the impregnable pass of the continent. They had the absolute advantage.

In that case, they should fight to the end!

Annie's words reassured Kanorse. He thought a bit and said, "You're right... I'll notify

the others, and we'll prepare for war!"

Those bastards had been messing with them for so long. Now, it was time for them to get a taste of the humans' iron fist!

## Chapter 514

# Magic Points and the Divine Punishment Protocol

Link's Mage Tower had grown by leaps and bounds since its construction a year ago.

From the outside, it looked as if the whole building consisted of only one tower. In actual fact, the main tower was surrounded by six other sub towers. Three of them had been built alongside the main tower from the beginning, while the other three were added to it later on.

At the moment, two additional sub towers were still under construction.

As a result, his Mage Tower now occupied more than a hundred square miles of ground. The main tower was more than a hundred feet tall, while the sub towers around it reached 70 feet tall. From afar, the whole thing looked like a forest of towers.

The Mage Tower had also drawn the attention of a huge number of magical talents.

Indeed, a Legendary Magician's appeal knew no bounds.

As of now, the number of students who had enrolled in the magical academy of Scorched City numbered more than 800 and showed no signs of stopping. There were more than 60 teachers currently teaching in the academy, which was a relatively smaller number in comparison to the students. Among them were the Half-Elf Eliard, Vance the Lich, Alloa the Maiden of Truth and finally Eleanor, who had sought sanctuary in the Mage Tower. All of them were Master-level personages.

In terms of Mana level, Eliard the Half-Elf had surpassed his seniors by reaching Level-8. Of course, his magical knowledge was still at Level-7, as he had only been studying magic for no more than two years. He was also of the same age as Link.

This sudden growth spurt had startled many people. There was even talk of candidates for future Legendary Magicians among the people of Scorched City.

The number of books in the Mage Tower's library had gone up to 13764 volumes as well.

Ever since the construction of the Mage Tower, Supervisor Lucy had been busy collecting large volumes of magical books from everywhere. Even the official Magicians of the Mage Tower had generously donated to the library books of their own, which contained all their ideas and magical theories that they had developed over the years. Link too had authored close to 300 magical books and even a few more priceless ones on Legendary magic.

This was the first library to have ever been conceived by the human race. To human Magicians, as well as Magicians of other races, it was a place almost akin to heaven, as it contained countless books on Legendary magic.

One might say that Link's Mage Tower, in terms of scale and the amount of knowledge it contained, had far surpassed East Cove Magic Academy of the Norton Kingdom. It had even become the central hub of magical learning in the kingdom.

On that day, Link had gathered Eliard, Vance and Alloa, three of the most knowledgeable Magicians he had known, to conduct the last few adjustments to the Mage Tower's offensive magic circle.

The offensive magic circle was about Level-15. Link had finished the rough outline of the circle itself, though he had invited some of the official Magicians from the Mage Tower to put on its finishing touches.

At first, Link had just wanted the Magicians of the Mage Tower to contribute to the magic circle's design, as well as let them in on the existence of such a weapon in their midst. The fruits of their discussions had greatly exceeded his expectations.

With the three Magicians' combined ingenuity, they were able to conceive a rune that functioned as the magic circle's regulator, which turned out even better than Link had expected. Its function was not merely limited to controlling the magic circle itself.

As the saying went, there was strength in unity.

The magic circle was finally complete. Link stood on the regulating rune of the circle and channeled his power into the circle's energy pool.

"Link, the energy pool's reached 95 percent. It's almost full." Eliard had been observing the energy pool's state. At that moment, the pool was a bright red sheen.

Curiously enough, there was not a ripple on the pool's surface. From a distance, it



resembled a shockingly beautiful red gemstone.

So this is Legendary power, thought the three Magicians in unison.

In one corner, Vance was running a few preliminary tests on a magic puppet's core that was modeled after Nana's. Considering how much Link had grown since then, the magic puppet's core was ten times more powerful than Nana's.

Of course, this was in reference to the original version of Nana which was absent of any combat experience and had yet to receive the Essence of Life upgrades from Gretel. How much Nana had grown ever since was anyone's guess at that point.

When Vance finally finished his tests, he triggered the last regulating rune and activated the core.

A soft hum sounded. The runestone, which was almost as big as a human brain, lit up instantly. There was then a gentle, melodious female voice resounding in the air. "Core has been activated. Please enter command."

The other three Magicians stared at each other, then at Link. After thinking for a while, the latter said, "Let's call you Lily."

The voice spoke again. "Command received. Please specify user authority levels corresponding to all Mage Tower members."

As Link had absolute authority over Lily, he could remotely command her to shut herself down or even self-destruct.

Lily would serve as the central core of the Mage Tower's main tower. With such power in her hands, Lily not only had control over the tower's offensive magic circle, but she could also even be regarded as the spirit of the tower itself.

Link had prepared a list specifying every Mage Tower member's user authority level according to their respective magical ranking.

He then entered the list of names into Lily.

As a Level-11 Magician, Link naturally held the highest user authority in the Mage Tower. After him came Eliard and Vance, both of whom had Level-8 Mana and so were granted Level-8 user authority. Alloa, the Maiden of Truth, was a special case. Though

her Mana was weak, her knowledge of the mystic arts was much more profound than the other two. She was for the moment granted Level-9 user authority.

After her were the Mage Tower's official Magicians. The Magicians' apprentices came last. There were in total close to 1000 people on Link's list.

The user authority levels corresponded to each member's level of access to the Mage Tower's resources. The higher a Magician's user authority level was, the more resources he or she would have access to, from the Elemental Pool, the Alchemy Laboratory, the Enchantment Workshop to the magical books in the library.

To raise one's user authority level in the Mage Tower, a Magician would need to increase his or her own level. By leveling up, even more of these resources would be available to him or her.

Link spent the next half hour entering the names of the Mage Tower members as well as their corresponding user authority levels into Lily.

Of course, one's user authority level would not be enough to guarantee access. As there were a lot of Magicians in the Mage Tower, he or she would be required to contribute in some way to the institution itself in order to ensure greater access to its resources.

When he was done, Lily spoke again, "Master, should I initiate the reward-penalty system?"

Link had conceived such a system with the aid of the others. It was devised to measure the level of contribution each Magician had made to the Mage Tower, in units Link had named "Magic Points."

For instance, if a Magician's apprentice had forged Level-0 magical equipment in the Golden Rune enchantment workshop, they would receive 10 Magic Points.

These Magic Points could then be converted to gold coins as well as access to the Mage Tower's various resources.

Link gave the order. "Initiate."

With a few hums, history was made in Link's Mage Tower.

With the Magic Point system working in tandem with the Magicians' user authority

levels, the tower now possessed an extremely fair and transparent hierarchy among its members. With such a system in place, the Mage Tower would experience tremendous improvements in the future, while countless magical talents would be cultivated within its walls. Ultimately, the place would be transformed into one of Firuman's most glorious magical hubs whose splendor even the High Elves would marvel at.

Of course, this was all in the future. Link had no way of predicting it.

After activating the system, Link then began testing Lily's control over the offensive magic circle. He ordered, "Lily, activate the Divine Punishment Protocol."

The Divine Punishment Protocol was what Link had named the offensive magic circle. While it was only at Level-15 for now, Link planned on making further improvements on it in the future.

"Initiating... Activation complete. Lily requires authorization from the highest user authority level in order to initiate attack." This was Link's trump card that answered only to Link and no one else.

Link had imposed two usage guidelines on the magic circle. The first rule was that the magic circle would under no circumstance be used on him by anyone else. The second one was the authorization system.

If Link wished to launch an attack using the magic circle while being physically in Ferde, he could personally authorize it to do so. Whenever he was not in Ferde, he could authorize a representative to use the Divine Punishment Protocol in his place. The first rule would be applicable as well to Link's chosen representative.

As Link was about to begin his test on the magic circle's offensive capabilities, he turned to the other Magicians around him. The others had finished their tests and nodded at Link in confirmation.

Link then said, "Direction: 30 degrees north of east axis. Target: the flock of birds 3000 feet in the distance. Fire at will."

Saying this, Link activated the transmitting runestone in his hand. He had already assigned someone 3000 feet away from the Mage Tower to release a flock of seagulls into the air at his signal.

The other Magicians moved to the window, intently observing the moment of impact.

Outside the window, about 30 seagulls were released into the air. They then began to scatter in all directions.

There was a tenth-of-a-second delay on Lily's part. Then, all four of them heard the sound of a translucent, almost imperceptible beam of light ripping through the air above them.

At the same time, the seagulls in the distance vanished into thin air. They were completely vaporized.

After that, nothing else stirred in the area.

A second later, when the 30 seagulls had evaporated in the sky, Lily's voice came. "Target neutralized, attack complete."

It was perfection!

He would probably not survive if he were to be locked down and took such an attack from the magic circle.

Link and the others clapped their hands in celebration of their success.

"With this weapon, no one would be foolish enough to trespass in Ferde," said Eliard.

"Those High Elves would do better not to overestimate their abilities now," said Vance, with a hint of concern.

"This place is starting to feel more like a magical city," said Alloa, laughing.

When the excitement had died down, Link went to check on the energy pool. The attack had apparently expended 0.5 percent of the pool's total energy. He then checked on the state of the firing magic circle. Some of the circle's accompanying materials were somewhat overheated, but otherwise, everything functioned normally as before.

The magic circle's highest firing rate was 200 beams per second. Judging from its energy consumption, it could probably fire around 6000 beams continuously for 30 seconds. Each beam contained Level-15 power.

With such power, he could probably cut a swath through a small army below the Mage Tower!

When everyone else confirmed that they found no abnormalities on their parts, Link said, "Come, a feast awaits us on the observatory. This calls for a celebration!"

Naturally, the other three Magicians had no objection to this.

The observatory's diameter was more than 30 feet. A windproof magic formation was placed around it. From the observatory, one could look out over all of Scorched City. At that moment, an extravagant banquet had been prepared for them with five attendants around the table waiting to serve them.

As the four of them seated themselves, they began eating and drinking, while relishing in that surreal sensation of towering over everything else below the observatory.

After a while, Eliard exclaimed, "I can't believe I'm able to experience this moment. To think I had only wanted to remain a normal Magician before..."

He had sacrificed his body and dignity to a rather repulsive countess for half a year in order to pay for his school fees, but now, Eliard had earned the respect and reverence of everyone else for his contributions. He still could not believe what he had been through to arrive at this point.

Vance took a gulp of beer, then sighed, "Me too, I thought I was going to stay a skeleton for the rest of my life. Never had I dreamt that I would be a witness to such a historical moment."

Alloa, the Maiden of Truth, took a sip from a bottle of fruit wine and smiled. "Leaving the Dark Elves behind was the best decision I had ever made in my life."

Link laughed, then stood up and vigorously held up his cup. "Everyone, this is just the beginning. The future rests in our hands. Whoever dares cross our path will face our fury!"

Everyone else was in high spirits as well, and they all rose up to raise their cups at Link.

Their drunken merrymaking was then interrupted by a young Magician who had brought in a travel-worn scout. The young Magician looked at the masters of the

mystic arts in the observatory with a reverent glint in his eyes. He humbly inclined his head before them, though deep down, he swore to himself that he would one day make a name for himself and be worthy of being invited to such a feast alongside Eliard and the other Magicians.

The messenger, on the other hand, was stunned speechless by such a lively sight. It was also his first time coming to such a high place. He then handed Link the letter in his hand.

"Drink up, then get some rest," said Link to the messenger. He then tore the envelope open.

There was not much written on the letter. It was news from the Black Forest. When he was finished reading, Link said to the others, "Everyone, it is time!"

It was time to sow the seeds of strength in Ferde and build a magical army that knew no equal in the land of Firuman.

# Chapter 515

## Amazingly Effective!

### Link's Mage Tower

Today, when all the Magicians woke up and went to their work rooms, they saw a new clear water mirror in the center.

The mirror had a long announcement. It said that the Mage Tower would enact a punishment and reward system from now on and described it in detail. There was also someone beside the mirror to hand out the special magic signets.

Sorotto was a Level-2 Magician, but he was already 30 years old. Because he was a commoner, he didn't have the chance to learn magic until he was 20. After that, he began working while learning basic magic. After five long years, he was still a Magician's Apprentice.

During these five years, he'd worked hard on creating various magic scrolls and basic potions to sell at the cheapest price. After scrimping and saving, he finally saved up 600 gold coins to enter a magic academy in a small northern city. That was when he started learning officially.

However, the tutors there weren't too skilled either. The dean was only at Level-4. The most advanced book in the library was Level-3; it was seen as a rare treasure and regular people couldn't look at it.

Sorotto had studied from a 60-year-old Level-3 Magician in the academy. Most of the time, he created magic scrolls for this old guy for almost nothing in return. It was rare for him to have one hour to study seriously.

After studying for three years, he finally became a Level-1 Magician. Then he was forced to graduate and expelled from the academy.

Level-1 was probably amazing for a regular person. They could live a comfortable life off of selling magic items. It wasn't enough for Sorotto though. He thirsted for magic knowledge and desired after the wisdom of saints. The world was unstable and filled

with war. An official Level-1 book that could help bring him power cost at least 100 gold coins.

Sorotto worked hard for more than one year but could only buy four Level-1 books. His Mana reached Level-2, but he didn't have money for those books. On average, a Level-2 book cost more than 500 gold coins.

This horrible situation didn't improve until half a year ago.

At that time, Sorotto had traveled thousands of miles from the North to Ferde. Coincidentally, the Ferde Mage Tower needed Magicians badly. As a regular Level-1 Magician, he was fortunate to be accepted.

During this time, Sorotto received his first Level-2 book. He personally witnessed the Mage Tower's fast development. He also saw many talented youths level up quickly.

All this made Sorotto feel the Mage Tower's strong vigor. At the same time, he felt pressured. He had to work much harder than before. Otherwise, the others would leave him in the dust.

What improvements are there today? Sorotto walked up in anticipation.

Beside the water mirror, he saw Carrido. He was a Level-5 Magician and the Mage Tower's Magic Official. Looking over, he chuckled and said, "Oh, Sorotto. Let me see... Here's your signet. Take it."

"Signet?" Sorotto found it strange. He accepted it reflexively and studied it.

The round thing was two centimeters in diameter. One side wrote Ferde in runes. The other side had a realistic profile. Looking closer, it was the Ferde lord. The material was special. The surface had many silver veins; it was made of Mithril. Under the veins, it was semi-transparent and had a tinge of crystal-red. The inside had some beautiful bits of silver.

At a glance, the signet looked normal. There wasn't anything eye-catching about it. But if one inspected it carefully, you'd realize it had too much to discover.

As a Magician, Sorotto instinctively fed some Mana into it. An instant later, a beautiful female voice rang in his mind. Welcome, Mr. Sorotto.



Shocked, Sorotto looked around and discovered that many people with signets around him had the same expression. Good, Sorotto wasn't an ignorant civilian. He quickly gathered himself. This must be some telepathy spell.

He replied in his mind, "And you are?"

I am Lily, the spirit of the Mage Tower. From today, I will serve you. For the specific details, you may read the announcement or let me explain for you.

Sorotto immediately looked to the water mirror. The announcement was long and detailed, but he read every word. After finishing, he couldn't contain his excitement. "So my authority is Level-2 now?" he asked.

Yes. With this authority, you are qualified to read all magic books at or under Level-2 in the library. You may request to use all magic material at or under Level-2 in the Mage Tower.

"How many magic points do I have now?" Sorotto asked.

Lily immediately replied, All Magicians will receive a starting number of magic points equivalent to their level. You currently have 200 points. You may use it to buy reading rights, time to use the Elemental Pool, usage rights of enchantment room tools, usage rights of alchemy tools, and more. You may ask me for the price list at any time.

Sorotto grew more and more excited. This improvement didn't seem like much, but for someone who'd gone through all the hardships of the world, he immediately saw the benefits.

From now on, he didn't have to get on his tutor's good side or have connections to learn magic. He could get what he wanted just by earning magic points. All the uncertainty and time wasted on human connections were wiped out by this new system!

He asked for the specific prices and ways to gain magic points. It was another long list. Lily's voice was sweet and patient as she read it all out for him.

Hearing all this, Sorotto realized with surprise that his 200 magic points were quite a lot. Firstly, he could exchange it for 2000 gold coins. It was ten times as much. Of course, he wouldn't do something stupid like that. From now on, all resources in the Mage Tower had to be bought with magic points.

With these points, he could buy reading rights to two Level-2 books. He could also request up to 20 hours in the Elemental Pool and more.

There were many ways to earn magic points too. For example, he could collect magic materials, write magic scrolls, create potions, complete tasks in the various city offices, and more.

If he had limited talent, he could still gain many points by doing these things. He could also go find talented commoners. If he found a magic genius, he could even get a reward of 5000 magic points.

This wasn't the most exciting part. In the items list, there was also a Tutor System.

In this system, every Magician had a respective consulting fee. As long as a lower level Magician paid the price, they could ask high-level Magicians any question. The high-level Magician would not be able to refuse and must try their best in answering.

The system would record and rate the entire process. If a consulted Magician was "irresponsible" three times, their consulting fee would be drastically reduced. They'll also be given a bad rating. This would negatively affect their reputation.

Every high-level Magician had different fees. Sorotto checked his own and saw that it was 20 magic points per hour. This could be converted to 200 gold coins an hour. He couldn't help but chuckle wryly. So my power is quite valuable. I wish someone would come to consult me, ha.

Twenty points per hour was much faster than making magic equipment.

What excited Sorotto was that he saw Legendary Magician Link's fee in the system. It was 2000 magic points for half an hour, and he would only accept five consultations per week.

This was expensive, but he was a Legendary Magician!

Glancing at it, Sorotto felt inspired. Without wasting a single moment, he turned to the Golden Rune Workshop. He planned on making some equipment to earn magic points. Then he could consult the Legendary Magician.

In reality, it wasn't just him. After all the Magicians finished reading, they all acted the same way and rushed to earn magic points.

Sorotto walked down from the hall for official Magicians and arrived at the apprentice hall on the first floor. He saw the apprentices were in an uproar too.

These apprentices also had signets, but they looked less fancy than his. I'm sure they have a lower starting point for magic points.

Sorotto felt proud but was also alert. When the high-level Magicians see me, they'll probably feel this way too. I heard there are occasionally banquets on the roof of the main tower. The Magicians who make great contributions have a chance to dine with the lord of Ferde... that is such an honor!

He quickened his pace.

...

One day after implementing the authority and Magic Point system, Link and the other high-level Magicians received Lily's feedback. According to the data, all production in the Mage Tower had doubled!

The resource usage rate had increased from 60% to almost 100%. Practically not a minute was wasted.

Efficiency had gone through the roof.

This was definitely good news, but Link wasn't always successful. Their power seeds ran into some trouble.

At this moment, Link, Eliard, Vance, Alloa, and Eleanor were working together to create a new power seed. But after starting it, they realized it was harder than expected.

Human bodies were complex systems. In addition, they had to create something out of nothing and had no starting point. After a whole day, the group didn't even come up with an idea.

Link knew this couldn't do. "Creating like this is too slow. We must borrow from others!"

"Borrow? From whom?" Eliard asked. Of the five here, he was the most innocent and didn't grasp Link's meaning.

Vance understood though. Smiling, he explained, "High Elves have the power of nature. Dragons have Dragon Power, demons have demonic power, and Beastmen have wild power. These are all unique. If we need to borrow, we'll borrow from them."

"But they won't agree," Eliard said weakly. "Like the High Elves, they're so proud. They're upset with us over the magic equipment now too." The atmosphere felt weird to him.

Alloa looked up at the ceiling without saying anything. Eleanor's lips curled upward. "Who said we need their permission? Can't we do it secretly?"

"Secretly? Are we going to the Isle of Dawn to steal books?" Eliard asked. "High Elves have books, but demons and Beastmen don't."

Link shook his head. "No, no. Just using books isn't enough. The wisdom of sages is abnormally complicated and can't be understood easily. We need to find some people to try it on."

He had dragon magic books and the Heart of the Dragon. He still wasn't clear about the essence of Dragon Power though. It had taken 72 sages' countless years from ancient times to create Dragon Power. It then underwent centuries of refinement. He progressed so slowly, mostly because there was no real thing to study.

Now, the God of Destruction was already creating a military in the North. They had no time to waste. Desperate times called for desperate measures!

Eliard gulped. Did they want to find someone to dissect? This was dark magic; they were legit Magicians.

Vance cackled. "You all don't need to dirty your hands. I can do it! I have experience!"

# Chapter 516

## We Are Magicians

What Ferde had plenty of was money, while the black market in the North had plenty of slaves to spare.

In the black markets of the northern kingdoms, if your price was right, the Syndicate would provide you with anything you wished.

The Golle Kingdom, one of the Leo Kingdom's neighboring states, saw the most active slave trade among the four northern kingdoms.

The Golle Kingdom had a huge geographical advantage, as it shared its borders with the other three kingdoms. With the ocean stretching to its east, the Golle Kingdom had one of Firuman's first largest ports within its borders as well, called Port Antique.

Incidentally, a slave market thrived in Port Antique.

On that day, an elderly man with thick flaxen hair and gristly sideburns arrived at the market.

With a generous wave of his hand, he tossed out tens of thousands of gold pieces to the slave merchants, buying every slave of any race he could find—from Elves to mixed-blood demons, and Beastmen to half-dragons.

The Syndicate thieves were all taken aback by the arrival of such a benevolent buyer. Despite their immoral ways, they showed good business ethics and professionalism by responsibly transporting the buyer's merchandise to a designated area in the wilderness outside Port Antique.

Once they were finished, the thieves suddenly fainted on the spot. When they regained their senses, the slaves that they had brought with them had all disappeared.

The group of thieves blankly stared at each other as if they had just seen a ghost. Given the bewildering circumstances of the incident, the thieves silently decided among themselves not to speak further on the subject.

One hundred miles to the east of Port Antique, there was a dense forest. As the North saw frequent rains and the weather was warm and humid, the trees there grew unnaturally tall almost like their tropical counterparts on earth.

The forest was filled with all manner of ravenous beasts and venomous insects. As a result, there was little to no signs of human presence.

Deep in the forest, a castle stood tall. From the outside, the castle seemed dilapidated. Vines entwined themselves around its walls, some of which had collapsed. None of the rooms inside seemed intact.

However, in the depths of this castle was a wine cellar, and in it was an extremely spacious Folded Dimension.

The dimension was a few hundred square feet wide and around ten feet tall. It was divided into two levels. The recently purchased slaves were kept on the lower level, while the upper level served as an experimentation area.

Vance was the one carrying out the experiments.

He had been in the castle's wine cellar for almost a month. Every day, screams of agony escaped the wine cellar's cracks like the inhuman cries of a phantom.

Link, Eliard, Alloa, and Eleanor took turns visiting the place. Link had left the place after staying for only a day, no longer able to withstand the cellar's conditions. Eliard threw up for a whole day after only glancing at the experimentation area. On the other hand, Alloa and Eleanor's reactions were a little better than the other two, but they did not last long in the cellar either.

The scene in the wine cellar was simply too inhumane to be spoken outside the castle walls.

A month later, the wine cellar's great door opened with a thunderous thump. Vance in all his balding glory entered the place and shouted into the darkness of the room, "Alright, people, you're all free."

There was no response from the wine cellar. Ten minutes later, a mixed-blood Blade Demon timidly poked his head out of the wine cellar's door. His body was covered with horrible scars, especially around his chest, all of which wound compactly with one another like cobwebs. Though his scars had largely healed, one could only imagine

what sort of torment he had been through in the past.

The mixed-blood Blade Demon's eyes were somewhat unfocused. This was due to the Memory Wipe spell he was under. As a result of the spell, the slave subjects in the wine cellar had all forgotten their time in the ancient castle.

Eleanor the Magician had cast the spell on all of them.

After the mixed-blood Blade Demon, the Beastmen came out next, followed by the half-dragons, and finally the elves. Like the mixed-blood Blade Demon, all their bodies were heavily scarred as well.

Of course, as their body structures were unique in their own ways, their scars were only temporary and would heal soon.

Before long, the slave subjects were all gone. After losing ten of them during the experiments, there were around 80 of them remaining.

When the slaves had all gone their respective ways, Link appeared beside Vance. He then willed the Folded Dimension to collapse on itself, bringing the whole wine cellar down with it.

He sighed and said, "I finally understand why you were called a butcher in the past. To think that I had allowed such cruelty to happen..."

Vance spread out his hands, indicating that it could not be helped. "Sacrifice of some kind is always inevitable in one's search for ultimate knowledge. This is the last time I'll sully my hands with such foulness. Oh, I definitely won't be able to sleep well with the shrieks of agony still ringing in my ears."

Link patted Vance's shoulder, unable to come up with any words of consolation for him.

Though the process was barbaric, their experiments had achieved results. Vance had more or less grasped from where each race drew their power. Such information was priceless to them.

When they returned to Ferde, Vance produced five copies of his results to everyone involved.

When Eliard received his copy, his hand trembled a bit. He was able to vividly smell the stench of blood from the experiments they had conducted. Eliard then raised his head to look at the others.

Link's face was dark and solemn, while Vance looked exhausted from the experiments. Both Alloa, the Maiden of Truth, and Eleanor's faces were expressionless as if they were already accustomed to such horrors.

Eliard then sensed that there was a stark difference between his worldview and the others. Before, he had seen the world in either black or white. The two color's purities remained intact even with the insinuation of a few grey areas.

Now, he finally understood that the world consisted simply of shades of grey. There was no such thing as a purely black-and-white world.

For instance, in the hearts of the people of Ferde, their lord, Link, was honorable and intelligent beyond compare. He was a messiah-like existence almost akin to the reincarnation of light itself.

But this time, he was the first to suggest using the strengths and powers of the other races for their benefit. Before, Link had wanted to end the lives of 70,000 people in Orida Fortress of the north, regardless of whether those people were good or evil. Link's hands were certainly stained with more blood than anyone else in the world.

On the other hand, who would have known that Vance, who usually disputed with him over magical problems as a fellow, mild-mannered scholar, would be willing to dissect countless corpses and even live bodies in his zeal to develop Battle Art?

Judging from their unfazed expressions, Eliard was sure that both Alloa and Eleanor had done their fair share of unspeakable things in the past.

Link looked at Eliard, who remained silent. He then said, "Is there something wrong? You seem shocked."

Eliard shook his head. "No, I just realized that there's no line between light and darkness."

Though he was still a bit shocked, as a Level-7 Magician, he managed to calm himself down and prevent himself from losing composure.



"That's not usually the case. To some people, absolute light exists. I've seen it with my own eyes in Orida Fortress. But..." Link remembered the pope and cardinal who had been willing to incinerate their souls back in Orida Fortress. Such individuals would sacrifice anything for the light.

Eliard raised his brows upon hearing this and waited for Link to continue.

Link fell silent for a while. He then continued, "But... we're Magicians. To us, the eternal conflict between light and darkness holds little to no meaning. Religion and morality are better left to saints who have long removed themselves from worldly concerns. What we do has concrete value. Our ultimate goal is to change the very nature of the world."

Before, Link had not given this much thought. As he grew in power and accrued even more experience in the world, his convictions had fortified. To quote a saying from earth, "Be unscrupulous in your methods, and never lose yourself."

Beside Eliard, Vance spoke out, "We need to be diligent in our efforts to reshape this world. There will be times when we'll be forced to shake off the shackles of morality in order to achieve our goals."

Eleanor added, "Link took the words right out of my mouth."

Alloa the Maiden of Truth then said solemnly, "This is the reason why I left the Dark Elves and sided with Link. He sees through everything more than anyone else."

To all of them, piety, morality and the values of mortal men were nothing more than impediments. A Magician should not concern himself or herself with the struggle between light and darkness, but rather with an object's practicality and whether it can be used to fulfill their objectives.

Though Link usually presented a noble exterior to the outside world, it was usually for the purpose of gathering support for his actions.

Hearing their words, Eliard looked at his compatriots around him in awe.

He suddenly had a clearer understanding of things.

Slaughter, cruelty, generosity, greed—all these things were simply a means to an end. These tools would only be used when needed and discarded when they had served

their purposes. Most people usually made the mistake of confusing means and ends and ended up losing themselves in the process.

Heaving a long sigh, Eliard sensed that the path ahead of him had become even clearer. There were others like him walking the same path, and they were all doing a great service to the human race.

"I understand." Eliard nodded.

Link then shuffled the papers in his hands and said to the others, "Alright then, let's get started."

# Chapter 517

## Seed of Sunlight

With the unique powers of different races for reference, the progress of Link's team skyrocketed. They were practically in a different world.

With Link as the leader, the five members of the team all had their own strengths.

Vance had the most experience. He created the Battle Aura field single-handedly. Battle Aura itself was a unique power. It just didn't seem as powerful or versatile as Dragon Power or the power of demons. However, it gave Vance rich experience, especially in his understanding of the human body. Thus, the work of creating seeds was built on Vance's foundation. Eliard had a great imagination, and his thoughts were creative. Many times, they broke through bottlenecks with his creativity. Alloa, the Maiden of Truth, had remarkable magical insight. This was an instinctive sensitivity to the truth. She could glance at an idea and know if it had potential. Reality proved that she was always right. This saved a lot of time. Secret Magician Eleanor had great attainments in the Secret spells. Power seeds naturally touched on the target's soul. She was experienced in this.

Finally, there was Link.

He was the most powerful; this gave him the widest vision. He also had the richest knowledge of magic. He'd studied secret, elemental, spatial, and time magic. In addition, he possessed grandmaster-level enchantment and alchemy skills. He was pretty much a master at magic.

If this team was a ship steering through uncharted seas, then Link was the captain deciding their direction.

The five worked day and night. Eliard and Eleanor had to rest occasionally, but Link, Vance, and Alloa all had crazy bodies. They could work without stop.

This craze lasted for 20 days. Finally, they created the first successful power seed.

The seed was packaged in a high-level crystal Mana bottle. It looked like 30 milliliters

of liquid. It was light blue and viscous. At closer inspection, one could see semi-transparent vortexes constantly flashing in and out of existence. It also radiated with a strange aura.

"For some reason, this aura reminds me of sunlight, like sunbathing on a summer afternoon at the beach." Vance provided a very poetic description.

Hearing this, Eliard's eyes brightened. He laughed. "Yes, I have a similar feeling. It has to be the beach by Ferde's pier. You lie on the fine sand and watch the merchant ships in the distance come and go. Seagulls fly in the air, the wind isn't heavy, but it's still there—"

"Alright, it's just an aura," Eleanor cut him off, not able to bear it anymore. "There isn't that much to talk about. But it really does feel like sunlight. In that case, let's call it the Seed of Sunlight?"

"Seed of Sunlight? That name is nice, and it's similar to its effect." Alloa nodded in agreement. "As long as the person has human blood, it can fuse with the seed and become effective. Just like sunlight, anyone who can feel it will benefit."

It was just a name; Link obviously didn't have complaints. "Then let's call it that. Now, let's begin the next step. Find some volunteers and test its effects."

This seed of power was already very refined and had no theoretical problems; no one could ensure that it didn't have potential flaws. They must experiment on a human to create a true seed.

"It's best to find a volunteer from the army. We need Jacker," Vance said.

Link thought this too, so he summoned Jacker. The man arrived within five minutes.

After receiving Epic Battle Art, he didn't stop training and improved quickly. He was only a step away from breaking into Level-8 and was a very powerful Warrior now.

Link met with him alone in the library. After arriving, Jacker saluted. "Lord, what are your orders?"

Link pointed at the crystal bottle on the table. "We created a new power seed. It's similar to the Dragon Power of dragons and the power of nature of the High Elves. It's new though. We need to verify its effects."

Jacker's eyes brightened. "Understood," he said immediately. "I'll find a Warrior right away. Are there any special requirements?"

"No physical requirements; a regular person would be fine. This must be kept a secret, so the Warrior must be loyal. It's best if he doesn't have any special background. As for the number, 100 would be good."

"No problem. Lord, give me one day's time," Jacker said.

"You can go now."

Jacker turned to leave while Link returned to the alchemy room with the seed. Clapping, he said to his four companions, "Alright, let's prepare at least 100 seeds now. Let's go."

...

Allen was 18 this year and was very young. Thanks to the rich food of the Ferde army and hard training every day, he was muscular and strong. He was more than six feet tall and weighed more than 180 pounds. If not for his youthful features, he would look like a 30-year-old man.

Despite his age, he was a veteran already. When he was 16, the king of Delonga had gone crazy. He'd been separated from his family during the chaos and fled all the way from the South. He didn't have anything other than his life when he arrived at Ferde. Coincidentally, Ferde had been recruiting soldiers. He'd been a bag of bones at the time but had a large frame, so he'd been recruited. Almost two years had passed.

He'd fought in the border war last year and killed more than 20 Undead Warriors. Now, he was a captain in charge of more than 50 soldiers. His strength had reached Level-4 too. He didn't have to care about food or necessities in the army; he could even receive two gold coins for his monthly salary.

To him, Ferde was now his homeland, and the army was his family.

This place contained his brothers, comrades, and the glory he yearned for. Even if his family were alive and wanted him to go back to the South, he would refuse. The South was too messy compared to Ferde.

Today, he returned from the training field and was wiping his sweat in his own room

when the door suddenly opened. A middle-aged man stood in the doorway. He had a gold star pinned on his chest—he was an associate general. Allen knew this man. It was General Rotokan, commander of his corps. He was a Level-6 Warrior.

"General!" Allen immediately straightened and saluted.

General Rotokan nodded. He studied this spirited youth, appreciation flashing past his eyes. "Allen, there is a mission," he said. "It's very dangerous, but if you succeed, you'll become a major and have authority over 500 soldiers."

As soon as he finished, Allen replied without hesitation, "General, I'll definitely complete the mission!"

"Very good. Remember, this is a mission announced personally by the lord. Don't disappoint me," Rotokan reminded.

Allen's heart started pounding; his body was even trembling. This was the lord's mission. Did this mean that he would have the chance to see the lord in person?

He was so excited. To the soldiers, even though Marshal Jacker was just a human, he was extremely powerful and had a high status. One would feel honored to meet him. The lord of Ferde, though, was from legends. He was an undefeatable war god—able to do anything, was impossibly wise, and extremely brilliant.

Practically every soldier's dream was to be appreciated by the lord. They would feel unparalleled honor even if they could only exchange a phrase. Now, he received the lord's mission! What did he do to deserve this?

"General, I know!" Allen almost yelled.

"Good. Come with me but keep low. This is a secret mission."

Hearing this, Allen forced down his excitement. He put on his armor and tried to act normal.

He followed the general outside the training grounds and climbed onto a black carriage. There were three other soldiers there.

The four stared at each other. They wanted to speak but remembering that this was a secret mission, they kept silent.

After a while, the carriage rode out of the camp and all the way to a big house in the inner city of Scorched Ridge. After getting out of the carriage, Allen saw that there were almost 100 other youths like him. They all had repressed excitement on their faces. He knew many of them too—they were all elites of the army.

Seems that many people are here for the secret mission. I have to work hard! Allen thought.

The other youths had similar thoughts. They looked at each other, feeling slightly competitive.

More carriages arrived after that. When there were close to 100 people, the carriages stopped coming. After a while, Marshal Jacker actually came.

He announced some rules. Basically, they would rest at this house tonight and head to the Mage Tower tomorrow morning.

Since the marshal was announcing this personally and they'd go to the lord's Mage Tower, the youths went "crazy." Thankfully, they were soldiers. Ferde's military discipline was very strict. Even though they were totally excited now, they didn't dare make a sound with the marshal present.

When Jacker finally left, they immediately started discussing amongst themselves.

"What kind of secret mission is this? We're even going to the Mage Tower."

"Is it to use a portal? The type of magic that sends you hundreds of miles instantly?"

"It's time to accomplish something!"

"We might see the lord tomorrow. What if I can't fall asleep tonight?"

All sorts of voices sounded in a cacophony. Allen listened quietly without speaking. He clenched his fists and thought, No matter what, I must accomplish this mission perfectly!

# Chapter 518

## Birth of the Sunlight Warriors

It was four in the morning, and the morning light outside was still dim.

Allen had woken up half an hour earlier. He had been sleeping on a wide bed with the other Warriors. He looked around him and saw that the others had woken up as well.

With a mission and the pressure of a face-to-face meeting with the lord himself hanging over them, no one managed to sleep at all.

The door slammed open. It was Marshal Jacker standing in the threshold. He barked, "Everyone up, we'll be heading off soon!"

As soon as he finished, there was an instant commotion in the room. Everyone got out of the bed at the same time. All of them were all dressed up and ready for their orders, including Allen.

"Good!" Jacker looked at his soldiers with a satisfied air. "Now, go out on the courtyard and stand in four groups!"

In no more than five seconds, all one hundred of them arrived at the courtyard and stood in four neat rows. Other than the sound of their footsteps, the Warriors made not a sound as they stood in place.

When Jacker got to the courtyard, he waved a hand at them. "Let's go!"

The dawn sky was still dark, and they could barely see signs of human life on the streets. With soft, hurried steps, the troop of Warriors headed towards the looming Mage Tower in the distance.

Even after having undergone expansion, the Scorched Ridge was still no more than 500 square feet. The procession of Warriors managed to reach one of the doorways on the side of the Mage Tower.

Jacker knocked on the door, which evaporated into points of light.



"Follow me." Jacker beckoned at his troop, who all obeyed his command.

Behind the door was a wide pathway. On both sides of the pathway stood two rows of magic lights, which illuminated their surroundings. The walls around the pathway were arranged neatly, its material soothing to the eye and beautiful like jade. The Warriors looked around them in awe and reverence as they walked along the pathway.

Allen too had the same reaction as the others. He also sensed that the pathway would turn once after walking a certain distance. When they had turned a third time on the pathway, Allen calculated the total distance they had traveled and came to a conclusion. We've been going up a slope on a square pathway.

When they had walked for a few more minutes, Allen grew more confused. The Mage Tower should only be ten or so acres wide and a hundred feet tall, he thought. But we've been walking on this road for more than a few thousand feet, and there's still no end in sight.

The other Warriors were also visibly perplexed by this, as they began to feel that something odd was going on.

However, not a word came from Jacker. He remained unfazed by the seemingly endless journey. The Warriors had no choice but to keep their confusion to themselves and obediently march on behind Jacker.

Just like that, the group of Warriors marched on upslope for 20 miles along the illuminated pathway. Some of the Warriors were already sweating profusely and gasping for air.

Allen sensed that he could not take much of the exertion any longer. For some reason, he felt that his body was somewhat heavier than usual. His feet sank heavy on the ground with each step he took as if they were made out of lead. Allen would have been fine walking for 20 miles through the mountains without feeling any strain on his lungs. However, the path they were on at the moment did not seem like an ordinary mountain trek.

A few Warriors had already collapsed to the ground, continuing the rest of their journey on all fours. This was really tiring.

"Marshal, are we there yet?" one of the Warriors blurted out.

Marshal Jacker still seemed undaunted. His answer was the same as before. "We're almost there. Just hold on for a bit."

The Warriors were left with no other option than to gnash their teeth and soldier on.

They continued on for ten more miles. The pathway seemed almost endless. Completely spent at this point, most of the Warriors had simply given up walking on two legs and now crawled on all fours.

If it were not for the fact that they had been given good food and sufficient training every day, these Warriors would have been lying motionless on the ground a long time ago.

Sweat dripped from Allen like rain. He was the youngest in his group. Though the others were around 20 years of age, he had reached Level-4 power, making him one of the more powerful Warriors in his squadron. He was also considerably strong. There were few among his peers who could rival him in terms of strength. He was especially gifted in the art of combat. How else was he able to slay more than 20 Undead Warriors in Girvent Forest without a scratch on him?

At this point, out of the hundred Warriors in his squadron, he was the only one left standing. However, he was now gnashing his teeth as he took each step with apparent difficulty.

I need to keep on standing. I'm the strongest one here, I need to keep on going! screamed Allen's mind.

As they continued on up the pathway, some of the Warriors had already lagged behind Allen. These Warriors now lay on the ground motionless, taking in huge gulps of air like fish out of water. Their bodies had all but failed them completely, and their minds were already floating in and out of consciousness.

White light enveloped their bodies. The next moment, they had completely vanished.

The other Warriors were oblivious to their compatriots' vanishing act. They were all too focused on marching forward to worry about anyone else.

There still seemed to be no end to the path ahead of them. One by one, the Warriors began dropping out of the group, their number steadily declining.

Sweat flowed from Allen's forehead, blurring his vision. However, he did not wipe it out of his eyes. His hands dangled heavily beside him, and he was too tired to raise them up to his face. Allen could only blink away the sweat that had dripped down his face as he resolutely continued his journey.

His lungs were now on fire. His heart beat like tambourines, which sent shockwaves through every blood vessel in his body. His legs had gone numb from the climb for some time now. They ground torturously against their hip joints with each step he made.

Still, he pressed on. Instead of crawling on the ground or leaning against the walls on both sides of the pathway, he resolutely kept pace with Marshal Jacker's gait in front of him.

After what seemed like an eternity, Marshal Jacker finally stopped. Sweat had now glistened on his forehead, and he was also slightly panting for breath. He turned around at Allen with a weary smile. "You're quite the sturdy one, aren't you?"

After trudging on for so long, the young man was already close to fainting. Still, his legs persevered on instinctively, and he would probably have walked himself to death if Jacker had let him do so. This was indeed a Warrior of unwavering resolve.

Allen smiled weakly back at him. He then hunched over to prop himself against his knees, as he took in huge gulps of air.

At that moment, their surroundings shifted. They now found themselves in a spacious hall, where the other Warriors were lying on square platforms.

After regaining a bit of his strength, he lifted an arm to wipe the sweat off his forehead. He then saw a black-haired Magician on the far side of the great hall. Though he could not clearly see his face, the figure exuded an indescribably oppressive air, as if he was the center of the universe himself.

That must be the Lord of Ferde. Allen's heart shook with excitement. Without warning, he felt his body being lifted up into the air, and then he landed on one of the stone platforms.

A clear voice resounded in the great hall. "Warriors, do you see the vial beside your platform?"

Allen turned and saw a trough beside his platform. A crystal vial with a cork on it was placed in the trough.

The voice spoke again. "This is the Seed of Sunlight. It will restructure and strengthen your body once you drink it. You will all be endowed with Sunlight Power."

Allen's eyes widened with amazement upon hearing this. Some of the more impatient Warriors had already uncorked their vials and drank its contents in one gulp.

Allen was a bit more cautious than the rest. He hesitated for a moment. His limbs still sore from his journey, he feared that his grip would not be firm enough and that he might accidentally spill the Seed of Sunlight from its vial.

After hesitating for half a minute, Allen finally decided to take the crystal vial. He uncorked it and poured the fragrant, light blue liquid into his mouth.

Once the liquid slid down his throat, Allen felt an inferno raging down his throat and into his stomach. From there, the heat spread out rapidly to all parts of his body.

At first, Allen only felt his body temperature rising. Soon after, he could feel a sharp pain cutting through flesh, bone, and blood vessels like a knife.

There were now shrieks of pain around him. Some of the Warriors roared out in excruciating agony. Someone had fallen from their stone platforms onto the ground, where he rolled around as if trying to put out an invisible fire around him. Suspecting that they were all given poison, a few others angrily mumbled curses into the air.

Though he could still withstand the pain, Allen too felt a sense of suspicion rising in him. Could it really be poison?

At that moment, the voice resonated once more in the great hall.

"Warriors, power does not come out of thin air. The strong do not simply descend from the heavens. Only through fire can steel be forged; only through countless battles and bloodshed can a Warrior's spirit be nurtured."

An epiphany came over Allen. That's right, one must experience great pain to become strong. How will any of us be able to attain greater power if we all fall under the weight of this ordeal right now?

Resolve filled his heart once more. He gritted his teeth and lay on the platform, letting the invisible knife carve through his body.

Only one thought surfaced in his mind. Our lord would not lie to us. I will make this power mine... I will succeed, I must succeed...

Time passed. After what seemed like an age, Allen felt that the pain in his body had subsided altogether. He now felt lighter and more at ease.

A mysterious power now lay within the depths of his body. This power was as fiery, domineering and passionate as the afternoon sun. When Allen first felt its presence, he also sensed that all the pain in his body had fled from him. This new power rapidly spread out in him, at the same time rejuvenating his weary body.

"Is this Sunlight Power? It's really powerful!" Excitement sprang from Allen's heart. Around him, he could hear shouts of joy and surprise from the other Warriors. They too had received this great power.

The power within their bodies grew from their chests and then to all four limbs. At last, a power circulation network had taken form inside their bodies.

The power in them continued expanding as it circulated through their bodies. Half an hour later, Allen could feel that the power's rate of growth had started to slow down and stabilize itself.

Still, Allen felt that he was now a few times more powerful than before. He could also feel that his new power seemed inexhaustible and that he did not need to worry about using it up.

The clear voice spoke up again in the great hall. "Congratulations! Most of you were able to endure the experience and received Sunlight Power as a reward. From now on, you are now the Sunlight Warriors of Ferde."

In the air, runes shaped like a golden sun appeared and drifted down slowly to the wrists of every Warrior who had successfully attained Sunlight Power.

There was a sizzling sound, and Allen felt a sharp pain from his wrist. Panicking, he lifted his sleeve and saw that a golden rune was branded on his wrist. The rune's design was complicated, but he was able to make out the shape of a sword on it. The sword was in turn surrounded by a number of golden stars.

Allen counted six stars on the rune. He turned to the Warrior beside him and saw that the rune on his wrist bore four stars on it. Out of the Warriors in the great hall, only Allen had six stars around his rune.

Just then, Allen noticed that his sight had improved tremendously. He was able to see the little points of light on the wrist of a Warrior standing ten feet away.

The voice spoke again. "Allen, you possess incredible willpower and have endured the most pain out of anyone else. As your reward, I have bestowed upon you the strongest Sunlight Power among your squadron."

A pale golden sword floated in the air towards him. Under the envious gaze of the other Warriors, Allen accepted the sword with both hands.

He saw that the light glinting off the sword was as clear as a stream, the runes on it elegant like a master painting. He grasped the sword's handle, and the sword instantly resonated with the Sunlight Power in his body. Golden light shone out from the sword. On it appeared a row of golden words which read, "May sunlight illuminate the world."

Allen's chest swelled with pride. He rose up and held his sword up high.

Everyone looked at him with admiration and envy. With the sword in his hand, Allen had nothing to fear. He could sense that the Lord of Ferde was also looking at him, his eyes filled with encouragement.

I, Allen, will become the strongest Warrior in Ferde! Allen swore adamantly to himself.

# Chapter 519

## Ferde's Sunlight Army

Mage Tower, alchemy room

Link, Vance, and the other three were concluding the results of the experiment for the first generation of Seeds of Sunlight.

"The results look good. Of the 100, 97 became much stronger," Link said. "Though the power of the three didn't change, they still received the strength of sunlight." He drank some fire wine. He was quite satisfied with this result.

Vance nodded too. This result was beyond his expectations. He'd thought that it would be good enough if they could have a success rate of 80%. Now, they practically had no failures.

However, everyone in this team saw things from different angles during the fusing process. They obviously had different opinions too.

"The high success rate is related to the fact that they're all elites," Alloa said calmly. "I saw the entire process. I think it's still too painful. It's okay for these elites, but for regular soldiers, the success rate will decrease greatly. Should we revise it further?"

Eleanor shook her head. "I don't think so. This is good too. As the saying goes, harsh fire creates true gold. Only after extreme pain can the Seed of Sunlight enter deep into the soul. Only then can the Sunlight Warrior have more potential for growth."

Alloa and Eleanor's opinion was completely different. "But the success rate would be much lower," she argued. "We have a high rate now, but when we move to regular soldiers, I would be surprised if 50% could survive. Each soldier only has one chance. This will greatly affect the expansion of the Sunlight Warriors."

The critical part was that each soldier only had one chance at the fusion. If they missed it, then they missed it.

Both had very clear standpoints.

Eleanor wanted to create elites. She wanted the Sunlight Warriors to become truly powerful figures in the future!

Alloa, though, saw the advantage in number. In her opinion, the soldiers only had to be at the standard level. There was no need to go for the extreme. While ensuring quality, they could add on more numbers. When there were enough soldiers, the combat ability would improve in quality as well. This was the root of an army's strength.

Eliard didn't speak until now. Hearing this, he shrugged. "Why don't we separate it? One method for elites and one for regular soldiers."

As soon as he spoke, Vance waved his hand. "No, that's not fair to the soldiers. Everyone should at least have the chance to choose. And how do you differentiate between elites and regular people? Potential is hard to see. You'll never know what a soldier can accomplish in the future."

With that, he looked to Link and shrugged. "Take Link for example. When I saw him a year ago, I had no clue he would rise to the Legendary level so quickly. If we use Eliard's idea, we might miss a future genius!"

He was right too. Letting every soldier have the right to choose was enlightening. The soldiers would definitely support it if they knew. However, both Eleanor and Alloa disagreed.

Eleanor waved her hand quickly. "No, no, no, that won't do. Regular soldiers don't understand the Seed of Sunlight. If they're allowed to choose, they would definitely choose the most painful method, either due to their impatience to rise up or envy of the strong. The lower option would practically become a dummy. The failure rate would still be high."

Alloa went even deeper. "Mortals are always controlled by different emotions. They have limited knowledge as well and just can't see the truth. Giving regular soldiers the right to choose is good treatment, but we won't be able to maximize our growth. The northern army is already preparing to come southward. We must become stronger as fast as possible. We can't use your method."

Vance threw his hands up, speechless. Both of them made sense, and he couldn't refute them.



Seeing this stalemate, everyone looked to Link for his decision. He already had a mature idea in mind. Chuckling, he said, "As the saying goes, your first impression of someone will be wrong. It'll be wrong after a day too. But after one year, you won't be wrong. My idea is that we can have the soldiers choose but without telling them."

This intrigued everyone. They waited for Link to continue.

"There are 30,000 official soldiers in Ferde. It's not much. We can increase Tower Spirit Lily's functions and secretly put all the soldiers into the observation range. We'll set some testing standards as well and rate them from the details of their everyday lives. We can watch for a while. It's the first generation of Sunlight Warriors, after all. One year isn't needed, so how about one month? Those with high scores will use the elite method. Those with lower scores will use the regular method. We can become more specific too and split the methods into different levels. Like five levels with different scores. What do you all think?"

Judging a soldier's potential from their daily lives was very objective. As long as they set logical standards, they wouldn't make any mistakes after observing for one month. The soldiers were technically choosing for themselves too.

The four exchanged glances and nodded in agreement.

"In that case, let's start. We have a lot to do."

The five began working in a flurry again. Upgrading Lily and large-scale production of the Seeds of Sunlight could only be done by them. It was a lot of work.

Link was responsible for 60% of the work. The other four divided the rest equally. Even so, they were still all exhausted.

Another month passed like this. Working so hard wasn't without its benefits though.

Link was constantly using up all his power. His Dragon Power limit kept rising as he used it without stopping. It rose almost 1000 points, reaching 17,000 in total. He also had many inspirations for spells during the process.

The other four benefited a lot too. They were practically learning and working at the same time, receiving great knowledge from Link.

Eliard especially gave himself the most difficult Seed of Sunlight after finishing all the

work at the end of the month. He survived it and received Level-9 Sunlight Power. His magic knowledge improved quickly as well. He grasped a Level-8 spell and officially became a Level-8 Magician.

The first week of the month was spent on modifying the tower spirit and inputting the soldiers' names. Then they worked on creating Seeds of Sunlight for the next three weeks.

During the process, the five modified their production method and raised their speed hundreds of times. They created 50,000 bottles within three weeks.

After observing the soldiers for three weeks, the tower spirit had a general rating of each soldier. Their scores were out too.

What came next was the large-scale fusing.

This was mechanical and repetitive work. Link didn't want to do it, so he made Vance responsible. He went back to his regular routine and tried out his new inspiration. When he had time, he would wander around his territory or accompany Celine. His days were comfortable.

Once he was relaxed, time flew by. Another half a month passed in a blink.

Today, Link was reading the fusion reports in the Mage Tower.

The situation was quite good. The regular soldiers all increased one level with the Seed of Sunlight. On average, they were at the pinnacle of Level-3. This was a scary number. The demon army from earlier had only been at this level too.

Those with the biggest improvements were the generals who were stronger to begin with. They had strong willpower and used the most difficult fusion method. It was greatly effective. There were almost 100 Level-7 Warriors now.

There were also some geniuses like Allen. Lily chose them, and they used the most difficult method on him. On average, they reached Level-5 or higher and had a greater potential. It was a great gain.

As the marshal, Jacker naturally chose the most painful method and succeeded. He suddenly became a Sunlight Warrior at the pinnacle of Level-8. He was now the strongest soldier in the army.

Sunlight Power was similar to Dragon Power.

It was practically equal to Dragon Power in terms of fast recovery. This ensured a soldier's endurance in battle. It could also heal. Though it wasn't as crazy as demonic power, it could still lower the casualty rate.

There was also a unique attribute. Under the sun, a Sunlight Warrior's attributes would increase. If they were under the sun when close to dying and had strong enough willpower, they could recover just by sunbathing.

Link had a deep knowledge of each type of Warrior's combat ability. He estimated that his Sunlight Warriors could completely counter a demon of the same level. This way, Ferde possessed a Sunlight Army of 30,000 that could fight demons face to face.

This huge force could change the entire state of the continent.

Putting down the report, Link walked to the window. Seeing the camp filled with sunlight and confident soldiers, he was very satisfied.

It isn't enough though. They don't have sufficient equipment. Ferde also lacks the ability to respond to a large-scale magic attack. All these things need to improve.

Having magic equipment that corresponded with the Sunlight Warrior's strength could double their combat ability. Paired with the strict military discipline, they might be able to completely crush the demons.

Of course, this required a great amount of resources and money. Things had to be taken step by step. Link couldn't do it alone either. For example, Eliard was already close to Level-9. If he was trained a bit more and broke into the Legendary level, he could become Link's, right-hand man.

Just as he was planning further, Link's heart jumped. It was the communication rune.

The signal is from Southmoon Kingdom. Something must have happened. Seems that the Syndicate still hasn't given up. In this case, I'll have to visit... Yes, I'll bring Eliard too. He's still too naïve and should have some more experience.

Thinking of this, Link used a life detection spell to find Eliard. Then he used Telepathy. "I'm going to Southmoon to take care of something. Do you want to go?"

"Of course," Eliard replied immediately. He'd wanted to travel through the continent for a long time.

# Chapter 520

## I Leave This Matter to You, Eliard

The wind roared in Eliard's ears as the world below blurred past him. He had never experienced such speed.

"Ahhh! This is way too fast! How is this even possible?" he screamed into the howling wind. He was always the first to express his awe and excitement whenever he saw something new and exciting.

His excited screams continued on for about an hour, before Fullmoon City, the capital of Southmoon Kingdom, finally appeared in front of them.

When the two of them landed, Eliard's head was still spinning. He said incredulously, "That was really fast."

Southmoon Kingdom was 1500 miles away from Scorched City. Still, they managed to reach there in no more than an hour.

Link laughed. "The speed I was traveling at just now was 600 feet per second, which translates to more than 2000 miles per hour. I'd say we made it just in time."

Eliard exclaimed breathlessly, "So this is Legendary power? This is quite an eye-opener for me."

Despite having flown at such blinding speed and at such a height, Link did not seem exhausted whatsoever. One could not help but marvel at the power he possessed.

Link chuckled. "No need to look at me like that. Work hard, and you'll reach Level-10 one day as well. When that day comes, I'll teach you the Void Walk technique myself."

"It's a spatial spell, isn't it? I don't think I'll be able to learn it right." Eliard wanted to, but knowing the obscene difficulty of spatial magic, he feared that he might not be up to the task.

"It's just a spell that lets you get from one place to another quickly. It's not that

difficult... Up ahead is Full Moon City. Here, take this runestone." Link landed beside Eliard and handed him a communication rune.

Eliard took it and then asked strangely, "Why? Aren't we going in together?"

"Of course not, this will be your personal mission. You'll need to make contact with representatives of Grinth Magical Academy. Then, after presenting yourself to the king of Southmoon Kingdom, see if there's anything strange happening within the city. You'll need to do all this yourself. As for me, I'll be carrying out my own investigations from the shadows of the city. If you think you can't handle any of it any longer, just use the runestone to contact me."

His responsibilities as the Lord of Ferde, as well as the fact that his every action was always under scrutiny, was starting to wear on Link. As Eliard was now a fully-fledged Magician, this was the perfect opportunity to train Eliard on the job while also letting him handle some of Link's more tedious tasks.

Eliard did not expect to be given such a task. This was the Syndicate they were dealing with after all; he should not expect Link to take care of everything himself. Besides, this should not pose a problem to a Level-8 Magician with Level-9 power like himself.

Eliard and Link were different in a number of ways.

Ever since coming to this world, Link had been all over the place without stopping to rest. To him, the world of Firuman held no secrets at this point. Now, he simply wished to put everything down and rest for a bit. On the other hand, Eliard had spent much of his time cooped up in the Mage Tower, studying magic diligently. To him, there was still a lot to be seen in the outside world. This diplomatic visit to Southmoon Kingdom was also his first time seeing the outside world from a Pinnacle master's point of view.

"Don't worry, I'll take care of everything beautifully on your behalf," said Eliard confidently.

Link smiled. "Good. Now go. If there's any trouble, don't forget the defensive runestone I just gave you."

"Don't worry too much about me, haha. Well, I'm off." The enthusiastic look on Eliard's face evoked in Link the image of a child who was just raring to leave his nest and venture off into the great unknown.

When he finished speaking, Eliard cast a Level-5 Mongoose Agility spell on himself and sped towards the gates of Full Moon City.

Link finally heaved a sigh as he saw Eliard reach the city gates in the distance. He puffed up his chest, then jumped for a bit on the spot, feeling a lot lighter and freer all of a sudden.

Right now, he was neither the Lord of Ferde nor a Legendary Magician. He was simply Link, a normal tourist who had come to Full Moon City looking for fun and adventure. Of course, this was all in jest. Ethereal Warriors were not to be trifled with. He needed to concentrate on the matter at hand.

He realized that his clothing was a bit too gaudy. A black battle robe with silver linings and a dark red cape might not look too distracting, but an attentive observer would be able to sense that he was no ordinary traveler. He needed to change it a bit.

With a nudge of his will, his body began to shimmer. The light instantly transformed into form-fitting, dark green, leather armor. Dangling from his waist was the Dragon King's Fury sword.

When he was done, Link conjured a mirror in front of him to check on his new clothes.

Armor's too new. Better give it a bit of wear here and there. Signet's too conspicuous as well, better keep it. The Dragon King's Fury sword looks a bit too elegant, better change it up a bit. Body's way too clean to resemble an ordinary wanderer. Let's dirty myself up a bit... almost there.

When he was done with his makeover, Link was now wearing somewhat worn-out leather armor. A normal steel sword dangled from his waist in place of the Dragon King's Fury sword. He had also cut an inch of his hair. With his face covered with dust, he now looked like a run-of-the-mill mercenary.

When everything was settled, Link began walking towards Full Moon City.

After entering the city, Link strolled around the place and hung out at a local tavern where mercenaries from all walks of life had gathered for drinks and gossip. Two hours later, he had a better understanding of what was going on recently in Full Moon City.

On the surface, everything seemed in order, but there was also talk of a gang of

fearsome bandits terrorizing the mercantile route on the city's south side.

These bandits had appeared half a month ago. They came and went as they pleased. Any unfortunate traveling merchants passing through the area were all brutalized by them.

Before, this particular stretch of road was always busy with people and caravans. It was one of the most important passages leading towards Southmoon Kingdom. Now, the road was completely sealed off by these bandits.

Of course, the king did not succumb to their demands.

For the past month, he had used up all kinds of methods to flush out these hooligans. He had even resorted to dispatching a thousand cavalymen to resolve the problem, but they all returned unsuccessful. The bandits had simply avoided direct confrontation with the king's soldiers.

Left with no other choice, the king had put up a bounty on the heads of these bandits. When Link came to the city, the bounty had risen to 3000 gold pieces.

As a result, many mercenaries had flocked to Full Moon City, ready to do whatever it took to lay their hands on that bounty.

Right now, Link was in a bar called "Gear Up Tavern" on the south side of the city. Though the tavern might seem small, the mercenaries who had gathered here had an above average power level, the weakest among them being Level-4. If there was anyone in this city who could pull this job off, it would certainly be any one of the mercenaries in this tavern.

Link sat in a corner of the tavern at the moment, a glass of beer and a plate of fried green beans set in front of him. As he absently chewed on his food, he listened closely to the gossiping mercenaries around him. The other portion of his concentration was directed to the Dragon King's Fury sword on his waist.

His Dragon Power's recovery rate was now at 45 points per second, which was almost equal to the Red Dragon Queen's. As he had no use for his Dragon Power at the moment, he thought it would be better to recharge the Dragon King's Fury sword with it. With enough Dragon Power, the sword might be able to unlock a new level.

The mercenaries in the tavern were all busy chatting about the bandits.



"I hear these bandits have some mysterious power. I heard from one of the cavalrymen that they could shapeshift. When he stabbed his sword at one of the bandits, his body instantly turned into water. When he pulled his sword out, the bandit came out unharmed."

"Isn't that magic? What's so mysterious about that?"

"If any one of them turns into water, we'll just chuck one of those dwarven explosives at them. Even if he turns completely into water, he'll still be blown into pieces by the explosion."

"Your talk is cheap. If they're giving even the kingdom's calvarymen a hard time, these bandits must be something. I don't know if any of us will be able to get the bounty this time."

"There's got to be someone capable around here. What's to fear?"

Everyone nodded in agreement at that and then poured their beers down their throats. When they were done, the mercenaries opened up a new topic between themselves.

There was a silence in the tavern for a moment. Then, someone said, "I hear the North is preparing for war again."

"Oh?"

"I see."

"Hmm."

All kinds of noises were raised in response to the news. Then, everyone waited for the mercenary from the North to elaborate further on the subject.

The mercenary took another gulp of his beer and sighed. "A month ago, I was in Gladstone City. I saw with my own two eyes a large number of Warriors and cargo being transported towards the iron line of defense. I also heard from the folks who had just gotten back from the Black Forest that the Dark Elf scum had started summoning creatures from the Isomerism Realm."

The tavern fell silent again. Then one of them angrily cursed, "Dark Elf scum!"

"Nothing good ever came from them pointy ears, I'll tell ya! The other day, I met this High Elf wanderer. With that haughty look of his, I really wanted to pull his head down!"

"Are you talking about..."

The conversation had gone off in all kinds of directions among the mercenaries. Link could not care less about them at this point. He had gotten what he wanted. He was now sure that the bandits they were talking about were Ethereal Warriors, and from the mercenaries' accounts, they only seemed to have a normal power level.

The bandits were simply testing how far the Lord of Ferde himself would meddle with Southmoon Kingdom's affairs.

Link decided that his best course of action for now was to wait for the enemy to make their first move. If Eliard could not deal with things on his own, Link would need to step in and take matters into his own hands.

Right now, he deserved all the rest he could get. He had been way too occupied with things back in Ferde.

He rested the back of his head against his hands, propped his legs up on the table and continued eating his green beans as he listened to the mercenaries' chatter almost nonchalantly.

He then saw a 30-year-old archer enter the tavern.

The man's face was extremely handsome. It was also adorned with a pair of sideburns that exuded virility. His eyes belonged to someone who had seen much of the world. His Battle Aura was Level-7, befitting his weathered look, and his long gorilla arms that indicated his mastery of the bow.

With such power, he must have quite the reputation as a mercenary.

As he entered, the tavern went silent. Link then heard someone mutter, "Look, Eagle-eye Irvan's here."

Eagle-eye Irvan?

Link had heard of this name before. In the game world, he was an excellent mercenary.

However, in one mission, he had the misfortune of coming across a Fodor Flaming Demon who tore him up and swallowed him whole, leaving nothing but a boot behind. Link's mission back then had been to track the Fodor Flaming Demon by following the aura left on Irvan's boot.

In this world, the demons did not make their way down south which meant that Irvan was still alive and well.

The man looked around him and walked towards Link, as his table was the only one left with an empty seat. He said to Link, "Put your foot down, mate!"

Link did not move an inch and instead just looked at him sideways. "There's plenty of space here. Sit wherever you like."

He was now one of the vulgar mercenaries in the tavern, and normal mercenaries had no business with decorum or manners. The only thing that mattered to these people was the size of their fists, and only those with big fists had the right to speak.

Right now, he wanted to know a bit more about this Eagle-eye fellow, and what better way to make a friend here than a good old-fashioned bout of fisticuffs?

# Chapter 521

## I'll Discipline Him for You!

### Gear Up Tavern

With Link's words, the mercenaries in the tavern knew that it was time to fight. Everyone spun around, picked up their cups, and got ready to watch the show.

Mercenaries didn't care about right or wrong. It was just a battle of power.

If Link could beat Irvan, then he was right. People would laugh at Irvan for overestimating his own power and look for a beating.

If Link lost, then he would be the classic example of pretending to be cool. He'd instantly become a laughingstock and wouldn't be able to stay in the tavern.

Irvan furrowed his brows. He was an archer and didn't like to have conflicts over such a small thing. But he knew the rules between mercenaries. If he surrendered and left now, his reputation as Eagle Eye would be gone. Others would say he was a coward. He had to go up and teach this guy a lesson.

Surrendering was not an option. Mercenaries depended on their reputation for a living.

This young man looked really average too. He wore old leather armor and was covered in dust, his black hair tied back casually. He looked nothing more than a poor mercenary. Irvan didn't believe he could be very skilled.

At this time, Link was still eating the green beans on his plate. He tossed the beans up and opened his mouth, letting the beans fall in. The entire process was filled with disdain. He totally ignored the archer beside him.

Irvan had wanted to treat this as a common scuffle, but Link's actions pissed him off. Taking a deep breath, he said coldly, "Hey, you don't like me being Eagle Eye, so you're here to look for trouble?"

Link side-eyed him and then closed his eyes. "What do you mean? I'm just sitting here not doing anything. If someone's looking for trouble, it's probably you."

With that, he grabbed another bean to toss into his mouth.

When the bean was in mid-air, Irvan suddenly moved. His hand shot out like lightning to take his bow. At the same time, he knocked the arrow against the bowstring. Whizz. The arrow shot out, going straight for the bean Link had tossed up.

He wanted to hit the bean so the other would know how skilled he was. This action had a special term in the mercenary world—show-off. They would use this when they didn't want to create true conflict.

Show-offs usually happened inside the city because cities had guards and laws. Killing or hurting someone there was troublesome. If they were in the wilderness, they would go straight for blood.

Take Irvan's action for example. If he shot the tiny bean in the air, it meant: I can hit such a small thing in such a short time. It's just as easy for me to take your life. If you're smart, surrender now!

This was something Eagle Eye could do easily before. Today, things were different.

Just as the arrow was about to hit the bean, Link suddenly blew some air.

Poof. The bean jumped up. The next moment, the arrow flew past under the bean without hitting anything. After that, the bean continued falling. Link's head didn't move at all. He just opened his mouth, and the bean fell in. He continued eating.

When he was done, Link gazed at the arrow buried into the wooden wall. Smiling, he said, "Don't shoot arrows when you're not skilled enough. If you hit an innocent bystander, the king might drag you to the gallows."

Irvan huffed. He knew he'd met a match today, but he still wouldn't surrender. He hadn't used all his power yet. It wasn't a big deal.

Thinking of that, he tossed his bow to the worker on the side. Rolling up his sleeves, he threw a punch at Link's face. He didn't use any Battle Aura. It was just pure physical strength.

As long as no one died, the city guards wouldn't care about a regular fight without weapons or Battle Aura in a tavern full of mercenaries. Even if some uppity guard wanted to get into their business, the tavern's owner would help get rid of him.

Of course, if they damaged the tavern, they had to pay for it. That was the rule.

Irvan still held back some power for this punch. Otherwise, with his strength, the opponent could die if he didn't defend himself in time. That would be annoying.

Even so, the commotion was shocking. Irvan was a Level-7 Warrior, after all. His punch created a gust of wind, and before his fist reached Link, Link's hair was already blown into a mess.

Many mercenaries in the tavern exclaimed instinctively. They predicted that since Link was sprawled on the chair, he couldn't use much power. He definitely couldn't dodge Irvan's punch and would get beaten to a pulp. He might even get knocked unconscious.

But then Irvan's fist was blocked.

Link calmly raised his arm and grasped Irvan's fist. His body was at Level-11. Facing this arrogant Level-7 archer was like a demon against a little boy. They were in totally different leagues.

He was just clutching Irvan's fist, but the man felt that he'd punched iron. No matter how he struggled, his fist wouldn't move.

Irvan immediately realized that he was facing a master. But he was at Level-7. Though he wasn't almighty, he was still respected usually. No way he would beg for mercy now.

Link didn't expect that either. He pushed the fist toward the side a bit, and Irvan was forced back a few steps.

"Alright, archer. Go do what you need to do and stop bothering me."

After Irvan caught his balance, his face reddened. He snatched his bow from the worker, glanced at Link, and walked away angrily. He couldn't stay in this tavern any longer.

Link continued sitting with his feet propped, eating the beans. After a few beans, he realized the mood was off. Turning, he saw all the mercenaries gaping at him. It

actually felt nice to be looked at like that. His mood improved and he chuckled.

"Everyone, keep talking, keep talking. Don't look at me or else I'll get angry!"

The mercenaries gulped. They would remember this guy. Seeing that Link didn't plan on talking to anyone, they started conversing amongst themselves again. However, everyone kept away from Link so they wouldn't get in trouble.

...

On the other hand, Irvan left the tavern and walked quickly with his head down. He didn't slow down until he left the area, but his face still felt hot.

It was truly humiliating this time.

He looked around, wanting to find somewhere to hide. When that damn fellow walked out of the tavern, he would shoot the man's leg or stomach to make him suffer. It would also make Irvan feel better.

But after thinking further, he forced down the urge. Whatever. That guy is so powerful at such a young age. He would definitely improve more. If I miss, I'll get a big enemy instead. It's not worth it.

He still couldn't bear the anger though. It felt horrible. Irvan's face turned livid with his eyebrows down and lips pursed tightly as he sped down the street. It was obvious he was frustrated.

Just as he walked, a familiar voice sounded before him. "Hey, Eagle Eye Irvan, it's you, right... Yes, it's you. I knew Eagle Eye wouldn't pass up a reward of 3000 gold coins."

Irvan looked up to see a tired, smiling face. Beside the person was a woman with flaxen-colored hair and a middle-aged Magician in a gray robe.

Seeing these three, Irvan muttered, "I was wondering why I was so unlucky today. It's because you three grave robbers are here, bringing all the bad luck."

Skinorse wasn't upset at being called a grave robber. He chuckled at Morrigan. "I bet this guy was taught a lesson by someone. Otherwise, he wouldn't be so pissed."

Morrigan studied Irvan and chuckled too. "I bet it's someone really powerful and he

didn't have any way to fight back. Eagle Eye, am I right?"

Priest Moya looked at Eagle Eye's expression. Seeing that he was about to explode, she quickly comforted, "Alright, even the lord of Ferde wouldn't dare say he's undefeatable. It's normal to meet a more powerful opponent. Irvan, we're good friends. Tell us who you ran into?"

Moya wasn't ugly and had a gentle voice. Eagle Eye couldn't keep being angry after being comforted like that. He sat down next to some flowers by the road and let out a long sigh. "I just came out of Gear Up Tavern," he muttered. "There's a young guy who took up an entire table by himself, even propping his feet up. The tavern is filled with people. I wanted him to move, but I was kicked out just after one move. How unlucky am I?"

As soon as he finished, Skinorse slapped his knee and burst into laughter. "Unlucky, really unlucky. You lost all your dignity, hahaha, hehehe."

Seeing that Irvan was honestly about to explode, Moya cried out, "Okay, Skinorse, if you're so skilled, then you go. Go discipline that young guy."

"Fine, I'll go. It's just some young guy. Irvan, I'll discipline him for you!" Skinorse rolled up his sleeves and strode to the Gear Up Tavern.

Moya and Morrigan followed. Eagle Eye was angry at Skinorse's mockery, but they were still friends and had worked together before. Now, Skinorse was helping him, so he followed too.

The group powerfully strode into the tavern.



# Chapter 522

## Legs Turned to Jelly

### Gear Up Tavern

Skinorse was not the type to think things through before opening his mouth. However, he usually exercised great caution when he had to.

When he arrived at the tavern's entrance, he slowed down and took a deep breath to calm himself down. He then raised a hand to wipe at his face, causing it to slacken. His body was able to relax considerably as a result.

The high and mighty air he had assumed before was gone. He now looked like an ordinary customer who was just about to enjoy a glass of beer in the tavern.

Still, he remained standing at the doorway, in no hurry to enter the tavern. He then asked, "Where's he sitting at? What's he look like?"

Eagle Eye Irvan stood behind Morrigan, not daring to let himself be seen by the people in the tavern. He replied in a low voice, "He's sitting on the leftmost corner of the tavern. The guy looks 30, well-built, about six feet tall. He has a steel sword on his waist. Oh, and he's got black hair and has his feet on the table. When I left, he was eating fried green beans."

"Got it." Skinorse nodded. His eyes scanned the throng of people in the tavern and finally found his mark. He muttered, "Can't believe the nerve of this guy. Whole place's jam-packed with people, and he's got the whole table to himself."

Hearing this, Irvan muttered angrily back, "Right? And I was just about to teach him a lesson for being so inconsiderate."

"Better be careful, though. If he's bold enough to do something like this, he must have some skill himself," reminded Moya.

Morrigan said, "The place is teeming with masters of all shapes and sizes at this time of year. Ski, it's not too late to pull out now."

Skinorse remained brimming with confidence. "Don't worry, why would an actual master even come to a place like this? Besides, I've just reached Level-9, and I'm only one level away from Legendary. What are the odds of finding a Legendary master in this tavern?"

His words sounded reasonable enough. Moya and Morrigan could not find the words to change his mind.

Skinorse then smoothed out his shirt, held his head high and walked into the tavern in long strides. When he was inside, he let his eyes wander to the left side of the tavern without making it seem too obvious.

With one glance in that direction, Skinorse's feet turned into jelly. He staggered and nearly fell face-first to the ground.

He immediately stood up without saying a word, then turned to leave the tavern. He passed Moya wordlessly still and kept on walking forward.

Seeing this, Irvan raised a brow and went up to ask, "Skinorse, you okay? Didn't you just say you had just reached Level-9?"

Moya too sensed that something was off. "Skinorse, you having a fever?"

Morrigan the Magician was curious as to what had elicited such a reaction from Skinorse. He entered the tavern and took a look around. When his eyes fell on the leftmost corner, his legs too gave way beneath him. He then turned around and hurriedly left the tavern.

When he caught up to Skinorse, there was a confused look on his face. He looked at Skinorse and asked, "Skinorse, we're probably mistaken. I don't think it's the same person."

Hearing this, bewilderment came across Skinorse's face. He had seen the black-haired young man. His features matched Irvan's description exactly. The man was leaning back on his chair, with his feet propped on the table as he leisurely ate fried green beans from a plate.

At first, he had thought that it was the Lord of Ferde himself, but now, thinking back, he could have been mistaken. The Lord of Ferde should be in Ferde right now. Why would he be in there, dressed up as an ordinary mercenary?

"You're right. It's probably not the same person." Skinorse scratched his head, still unsure of his words.

Moya listened to the conversation between them, puzzled. "What on earth are you two talking about? Why can't I understand anything that you just said? Who was that?"

Eagle Eye Irvan was now curious as well. "Who exactly is this person that gave even a Level-9 master like yourself such a fright?"

Skinorse glared at him. "You'll soil your pants too if I were to tell you who he really is."

Unable to restrain her curiosity, Moya decided to enter the tavern herself. She wanted to take a look at whoever had frightened Skinorse so much.

Before entering, Moya pulled down her hood and then slowly walked towards the tavern. After a few steps, she walked around one of the tables and casually shot a glance to her left.

She furrowed her brows at what she saw.

Before her, a young man was leaning back lazily on his chair, his eyes almost completely shut. His hair was unkempt, his body was covered with a layer of dirt, and the stitching on some parts of his leather armor had frayed. He had all the defining qualities of a ruffian.

Looking at the man for a few seconds, Moya did not notice anything peculiar about him. Still confused, she exited the tavern and asked her three companions, "Who did you mistake the man for?"

Skinorse glanced at Morrigan, who remained mute beside him. He then said to her, "Don't you think that he looks almost like the Lord of Ferde himself?"

"The Lord of Ferde?" Moya shook her head. "Maybe. I was looking at him from afar, so I can't say for sure. You must be mistaken. Why would the Lord himself have the time to loiter around this place?"

This sounded reasonable enough.

Skinorse and Morrigan were more confident that they were mistaken now.

Irvan's heart thumped loudly against his chest as he listened to this. He tried to sound unfazed by this. "This is rubbish. The Lord of Ferde is a Magician. That ruffian back there is a sword-wielding vagrant. How exactly are they the same person?"

Moya turned to him. "Shows how much you know. The Lord of Ferde is extremely proficient in swordplay. He also usually carries a sword with him."

Irvan was shocked upon hearing this. He made a conscious effort to lick his lips wet. He then looked at Skinorse. "Why don't you go back inside again and make sure it's not really him?"

Without needing to be told twice, Skinorse headed back into the tavern. When he was inside, he took a closer look at the man and then exited. "Thank god, they only look like each other. The power he was giving off isn't quite the same."

Irvan let out a sigh of relief and asked, "Then why don't you go teach him a lesson?"

"Well... I think it's better to let bygones be bygones." Skinorse was still wary about this. The black-haired young man seemed way too nonchalant. He feared that something might go awry.

"Coward!" teased Irvan.

"Fine, I'll go. It's just one mercenary. Worst case scenario, I'll just get beaten up by him."

Skinorse walked back into the tavern. Under the collective gaze of the mercenaries, he strode towards Link. He then drew his dagger out and stabbed it on the table where Link's feet were raised. "Buddy, you look like a tough guy. I'm here to teach you some manners on my friend's behalf!"

Seeing how worked up Skinorse was, Link could not help but smile at him.

He had seen them come in and out of the tavern, trying to get a better look at him. Now that one of them had mustered up the courage to come up to him personally, Link felt that he was probably going to burst out laughing at any moment.

He stretched out his hand and flicked a finger at the dagger that was still stuck to the table. The dagger let out a clear twanging sound, which echoed around the tavern.

The expression on Skinorse's face began to change gradually. He could feel the fine vibrations of power the man's finger had sent off from the dagger.

Only one man in this world possessed such resonant, indescribably oppressive power.

"Why isn't he doing anything?" Irvan asked, looking at them from the doorframe.

Moya swallowed and whispered, "I don't think he can."

Beads of sweat appeared on Morrigan's forehead. "Eagle Eye, this is someone you don't want to pick a fight with. I can't believe you actually met him here."

"What do you mean?" Irvan realized that his hand was trembling.

On the other side of the tavern, Link retracted his finger and softly asked, "What brings you to the South?"

"There's an ancient site here. There's also the king's bounty. I thought I'd just drop by and give it a shot." The truth left Skinorse's lips all of a sudden. Deep down, he was cursing Irvan. What was he thinking, letting himself be dragged into another one of his messes?

Link thought for a while about this, then smiled. "Your power has grown quite a lot. Eliard's here as well as a diplomatic envoy. He's currently investigating the city's bandit troubles. Why don't you go help him out?"

He had wanted to be acquainted with Irvan at first, but the sudden appearance of Skinorse made things much simpler.

Eliard still lacked experience, and Link was worried something might happen to him. With experienced adventurers like Skinorse and the others to aid him on his mission, Eliard was sure to pick things up quickly.

"I'm not saying I can't, it's just... the bounty..." Skinorse tried not to show the trepidation in his voice. He felt guilty about wanting to rough Link up a few moments ago.

"The bounty's all in your dagger."

Link then leaned back into his chair and spoke softly, "Don't reveal my identity out

loud. I'm just here to gather some information from these mercenaries. Go now, Eliard should be at the Magic Academy."

"Oh, alright, got it, I'm going." Skinorse pulled out the dagger from the table without giving it a second look and hurriedly walked out of the tavern.

Once outside the place, he let out a long sigh and said to Morrigan, "Come, we're going to Grinth Magic Academy."

Morrigan and Moya followed Skinorse without a word. Only Irvan hesitated.

Skinorse called after him. "What are you waiting for? Let's go, I'll split the bounty with you. How's 1000 gold pieces sound to you?"

Irvan jogged after them. His legs were limp like noodles. His voice quaked with uncertainty as he asked, "The man back in the tavern, was it really him?"

"Yes, you should count yourself lucky that you're still alive," growled Skinorse.

Irvan wobbled a bit and caught Morrigan's shoulder just in time. "I really am one unlucky fellow."

According to what he had heard, the Lord of Ferde possessed power capable of rending the skies and splitting the ground. He had eliminated the army of darkness all by himself. To him, those demons were like flocks of sheep waiting to be slaughtered. Irvan had just raised his fist at the man, and now he feared that he might be placed under some fatal curse for his transgression. Would he just collapse and die on the spot without warning? Would his soul be tortured for eternity?

All kinds of thoughts ran through his mind. He stood there almost in trance, sensing that a curse had already been cast on him.

Skinorse noticed this and patted his back. "Alright now, Irvan, there's nothing to be afraid of. Let me tell you, the Lord seemed to fancy you. Also, if he really wanted to end you, he wouldn't resort to such underhanded techniques. You would have been erased from this plane of existence completely. Under instructions from the Lord himself, the king of Southmoon Kingdom would also have slapped a couple of unpardonable offenses on you to justify your execution."

Hearing this, Irvan cheered up a bit. "Really? The Lord fancied me?"

Mercenaries like him were not worth much in the eyes of any other lord. Irvan swelled up with pride at the thought of impressing someone like Link.

Seeing the foolish grin on his face, Skinorse did not bother with him any longer. Moya added, "The Lord is a tolerant person, he won't take something so minor to heart. Got it?"

"Got it." Irvan sighed, then asked, "Where are we going now?"

"To finish the Lord's mission," said Skinorse. He looked at the dagger in his hand. It was already an Epic-level weapon, but now there was a red gleam around it.

He knocked the dagger against the Reaper's Dagger he was already equipped with, on which a large crack appeared.

"This is good stuff. So worth it."

...

Grinth Magic Academy.

Eliard had only been there for around an hour, and already trouble had found him.

Upon hearing that he had arrived at the Magic Academy, the king of Southmoon Kingdom immediately hurried over to welcome him personally. There were more than 20 people who had come out to receive him, including the king, queen and princess, all of whom were illustrious figures in the Southmoon Kingdom.

The king had given him a warm welcome. However, Eliard sensed that something was wrong, but he could not put his finger on it.

# Chapter 523

## Who's Lying?

Grinth Magic Academy

"Master, your lord must be very busy recently, right?" the king of Southmoon asked.

Eliard furrowed his brows at this. He'd heard that something happened to Link recently but this king looked dazed. This was his third time he started talking about Link. He seemed to really wish that Link could come to Southmoon.

"Your Majesty, our lord has been paying close attention to the situation in the North. If you run into any problems, let me know, and I will do my best to help you. If I can't, I will definitely help send the message." Eliard deepened his tone at the end.

"Oh, I see. That's good, that's good. I don't have any problems now." The king chuckled awkwardly. After a pause, he said, "Ah, let's not talk about this anymore, Master Eliard. You came from such a faraway place and must be tired. I won't disturb you anymore."

With that, he got up and left.

Eliard found this even stranger, but his expression didn't change. He stood up and saw the king out of the magic academy.

When the king's group left, he turned to the one responsible for the Ferde magic ambassador group. "Amir," he murmured. "Has there been any strange news from inside the palace recently?"

He felt that the king was very not normal.

Amir was a 30-year-old Level-5 Magician. He was short and looked wooden, but that was just the surface. In actuality, he was very sharp. This was the reason why he was responsible for the group this time.

He glanced to the side. Seeing that there were some people from the Grinth Magic Academy beside them, he said, "Master, the palace is as usual. I didn't hear anything



strange."

His tone was normal, but when he spoke, he blinked at Eliard. This meant he had something to report privately.

Eliard was taken aback. He turned to study the Southmoon Magicians. At a glance, they seemed to be doing their own things. At closer inspection, they were paying attention to him. One of the young Magicians was the most obvious. He would constantly look over.

Things were even more off now.

Eliard was clever too. He yawned and slapped his forehead; fatigue showed on his face. "That's good. I'm tired, actually. I'll go rest now."

With that, he patted Amir's shoulder. "Where are we resting? Take me there."

Amir nodded. "Lord, please follow me."

He turned towards the garden villa in the southeast of the academy. The villa was very big with more than 20 rooms. All of Ferde's Magicians were living in it.

Once inside the garden, Amir took out his wand. He shook it and cast a Level-5 Secret Spell: Soul Fog.

Light fog spread from his wand and expanded. It became omnipresent water vapor that shrouded the entire villa. Then Amir continued walking. After entering the villa, he led Eliard to a small room on the second floor and cast a Level-4 barrier.

Finally, he relaxed. "Master, the situation is very strange."

His earlier actions had alerted Eliard. "Why did you cast so many barriers?" he asked. "Are there spies?"

Amir shook his head, looking perplexed. "I don't know if anyone is spying, but for the last half month, there were times when I felt strange while sleeping. It was like someone was watching me from the shadows. I looked around but couldn't find any spies. To be honest, I can't take it for much longer. I've had so many nightmares these days."

Eliard studied Amir. He realized the man had light dark circles under his bloodshot eyes. His pallor was dark too. He truly looked exhausted.

The situation was quite serious. After thinking, Eliard turned to look at the surrounding barrier. "Are these effective?"

Amir shook his head, chuckling dryly. "I don't know. Maybe or maybe it's just a placebo."

Eliard furrowed his brows. He thought a bit and took out his own wand. This was special. He'd modified it from Link's Burning Wrath of Heavens. It was now called the Wrath of the Sun wand.

The wand looked like it was made of crystal and radiated with faint sun-like golden flames. When Eliard poured Sunlight Power into it, the flames would multiply until the entire room was painted in light gold.

"Sun Barrier!" he roared quietly.

Sun Barrier

Level-7 Sunlight Spell

Cost: 2000 points

Effect: Use Sunlight Power to create a barrier that blocks outer sensory. When the barrier spreads, all abnormal power in the environment will be forced out.

(Note: Sunlight shines over the world.)

A ball of faint gold light spread from the tip of the wand. The golden flood rushed past everything, and there were some hisses. There really were things in the corner—detection spells. They were hidden well but were uncovered by the Sunlight Power.

Half a second later, the barrier was complete. The entire room was covered in a thin layer of gold as if it was plated with gold crystal.

"Alright, no one can hear us now. Tell me what you know but hurry. Best if you finish within three minutes." Eliard's power was already regenerating as he spoke.

He was highly confident in this spell because Link had participated in developing it. It was created specifically for Sunlight Power. When it had been completed, Link had personally promised that, for five minutes, even a Legendary figure couldn't see inside the barrier.

Amir was shaken. He'd never seen power like this. However, there wasn't much time, so he repressed his shock and said quickly, "Half a month ago, there were rumors that the king, queen, princes, and princesses—dozens of royalty—all fell ill with some weird disease. It wasn't serious, and they recovered in a few days. There was nothing wrong. But a while later, there were rumors that the king changed. He's like a different man."

"A different man? Did he become better or worse?" Eliard frowned. Before coming, Link had told him about the Ethereals. Hearing this, he instinctively suspected that it was an Ethereal.

Amir shook his head. "I don't know. The king hasn't called us for this half month. We don't know much about inside the palace, and my message to the lord isn't because of the king."

"Oh, tell me." Eliard felt that Full Moon City's situation was off.

"Three hours ago, a Level-5 Palace Magician went crazy. He cast a Flame Blast spell inside the palace, destroying a pavilion. A bunch of soldiers and servants were killed. He was captured later and killed without any trial. Even more frightening, the details were instantly silenced. I can't find anything out no matter what I do... I think something's really wrong. The Southmoon royalty is going to have trouble."

"I see..." Eliard fell into deep thought. He looked to Amir. The man seemed really anxious and scared. This must have traumatized him.

Magicians were noble and important. Every country treated them with respect. Even if they were sentenced to death, it had to be a horrible crime and go through a just trial. Every Magician had to be convinced before the criminal Magician could be killed. Killing a Magician like butchering a chicken rarely ever happened.

There weren't enough details though. Eliard couldn't figure anything out. He thought a bit more and asked, "The magic academy seems guarded against us. Why?"

Magicians were usually independent. In their field, they didn't care much about

political power of the regular world. They only cared about a Magician's level. With Link's reputation as a Legendary Magician, they shouldn't be so feared here.

Amir sighed. "So many things have happened recently. There's a rumor going around Full Moon City that we brought them bad luck... Of course, this is just a small thing. The real reason is that Earl Andal, dean of the academy, fell sick. After he recovered, I felt clearly that they started watching us."

"Another sickness?" Eliard was shocked. If the people who fell sick were all taken over by Ethereals... He felt like he'd walked into a den of wolves.

He quickly calmed himself down though and started planning. He prepared to visit the dean of the Grinth Magic Academy. He wanted to see if the man really had any problems.

"Alright, keep your guard up. I'll pay Earl Andal a visit," Eliard said. He'd seen the man earlier and thought he was a bit quiet. Thinking back, it was strange.

"Master, should I go with you?" Amir asked. "We can have each other's backs."

"No." Eliard shook his head. "He's just a Level-6 Magician. I can deal with him."

With that, Eliard canceled the barrier. Without resting, he walked out of the villa. Outside, he walked alongside the square and then turned a corner. As soon as he turned, he saw a Magician from the academy come out of hiding and blocked his path.

He looked familiar. He seemed to be the one who'd paid attention to Eliard and Amir's conversation. Eliard remembered his name was Flemming.

When he got closer, Flemming suddenly said, "Master, I have something to say."

"You too? What?" Eliard found it strange.

Flemming looked side to side and muttered, "Be careful of Amir. He hasn't been acting normal. There are rumors that he has secret contacts with the robbers outside the city. I personally saw him with some weird strangers. I told the dean, but he doesn't believe me. I felt like I had to tell you."

Flemming was young. He was in his twenties and was only at Level-1. When he spoke, his eyes darted around as if scared someone else would hear. He didn't look like he

was lying.

Eliard was even more perplexed.

He'd only been in the Southmoon Kingdom for less than two hours, and there seemed to be fog everywhere. He didn't know who he should trust. Was Amir or Flemming lying? Was everyone lying?

Thinking it through, Eliard still didn't know how to distinguish truth from lie. He could only stick to his original plan—investigate the dean.

# Chapter 524

## Danger Everywhere

Grinth Magic Academy

Before long, Eliard was able to find Earl Andal on the top floor of the Mage Tower of Enlightenment.

The man was nearing 70 and possessed Level-6 magical knowledge. This was an impressive achievement among the Magicians of the previous generation, but age had caught up to him.

While the world saw a drastic growth among the younger Magicians due to the steady increase in Mana concentration, his power level had stagnated due to his wizened body.

The white-haired old man reclined on his leather armchair with one hand toying around his magic wand. Seeing the youthful Eliard, he smiled and said, "I knew you would come, young one. Must have realized that there's something odd going on here."

Eliard still did not have a handle on the old man's temperament. Just a while back, Magician Amir had also told him that Earl Andal had contracted a highly suspicious illness. With this in mind, Eliard remained suspicious of the old man.

Without a word, he began to feel his aura. It felt normal, at least for someone his age. Link had reminded him that anyone possessed by an Ethereal entity would display unnaturally augmented power. He had also told him not to dismiss the possibility that some of these might be able to hide their own presences.

He found nothing else to confirm his suspicions.

Andal seemed to have read his mind, as he continued, "Young man, you must have realized that the people here don't seem to be speaking truthfully. It's as if everyone's been possessed by some evil spirit."

Eliard raised an eyebrow and asked uncertainly, "Spirit? What spirit?"

Andal smiled weakly. "I don't know. What I do know is the fact that these spirits have attacked the king, queen, princess, prince, as well as me and a few other Magicians. Some of the attacks were successful, others not so much. They're extremely good at hiding themselves. Even I don't know whose body has been taken over at this very moment. The only thing I know is that I have not been possessed by these evil spirits."

"I find that hard to believe." Eliard had pulled out his magic wand and was now twisting it between his fingers.

"I don't have proof of this." A bitter smile surfaced on Andal's face. "That's what's so terrifying about these creatures. Regardless of whether they managed to possess any one of us, these spirits have succeeded in destroying the trust between us beyond repair. Don't think that I'm not possessed by one of them right now just because I'm having this conversation with you. Remember, they are capable of disguising and hiding themselves in our midst, and they are also extremely crafty."

At this point, Eliard sensed that the fog around him had thickened so much that everything was now a blur before him. He had never experienced something so bizzare.

He had never felt a shred of fear in a fight with anyone else.

He was now a Level-8 Magician. At this point, his power was near limitless. He was equipped with a powerful wand in his hand and the runestone that Link had given him as a defensive measure. However, he could neither see nor feel the enemy he was now facing this time.

"I'm way in over my head," said Eliard, sighing.

Earl Andal chuckled, "I don't think you can handle this by yourself. You probably should leave here right now and let the Lord of Ferde take care of things himself."

The one who should have come to this place in the first place was Link. But Link had changed his mind on a whim, and Eliard ended up coming here on his behalf. This was all just a series of unexpected turns

However, the Earl's words fired Eliard up. He smiled. "No need to bring Link into this. I too would like to see how big this particular python is."

"As you wish," said Andal.

At this point, there was nothing else left to say. Eliard turned around and was ready to leave the room. He opened the door. Just as he was about to step over the threshold, Eliard suddenly stopped. He then asked, "It must be really nice in Alford right now, I imagine?"

"Rubbish, that god-forsaken place..." Andal suddenly paused, then smiled even more bitterly at him. "You win, young man."

Alford, a city in the Delou Ethereal Realm, was known for its nightmarish weather and hostile environment. In truth, all the habitable regions in the Ethereal Realm were deplorable. Alford was simply one of the worst places to live in. The place was also renowned for being one of the three great cities of the Ethereal Realm.

No ordinary Magician in the realm of Firuman should be able to know a place like Alford. The fact that Earl Andal knew what kind of place immediately revealed his true identity.

Earl Andal was still smiling, though his eyes had turned cold. "Young man, you were never in any danger before. But now that you know who I am, I can't possibly let you leave here alive."

Warning bells began to ring in Eliard. He suddenly remembered what Amir had told him, that a Magician had suddenly gone berserk and cast a Flame Blast spell to bring down a palace. He was then executed on the spot.

His situation now was the same as that Magician. If he were to assault Earl Andal here, everyone else would think he had gone mad. There were probably other Magicians who had been possessed in the Magic Academy. As soon as they subdued him, Eliard would be immediately executed like the other Magician.

He was able to figure out so many things in such a short span of time.

A moment later, he turned around and pointed his wand at Earl Andal. "Radiant Sunbeam!"

Radiant Sunbeam

Level-8 Master Level Spell

Supreme Magic Skills: Soul Resonance (Instant cast)



Cost: 4500 Sunlight Magical Power Points

Description: Sends out a beam of pure hot energy and has a lock-on effect. Anyone hit by it will not be able to use any spatial magic spells below Level-8. The beam will shoot out three times. At each time, it will recalibrate its direction to match a moving target's movements.

(Note: Be gone like a pile of snow in the morning sun.)

Eliard's attack came fast and strong. He had the first move!

There was a tearing sound, as a golden beam of light flashed through the air not once, but thrice in an instant.

The first flash came. Earl Andal had remained on his chair, but the beam did not hit its mark. Rapidly, Andal dodged sideways, avoiding the attack entirely. The second beam of light immediately adjusted its direction.

He dodged again, but this time, it took a lot more effort than before. The beam of light managed to graze his skin, which instantly set it ablaze.

He was still in mid-air as he dodged the second beam when the third beam came. It pierced through his chest, leaving a gaping hole with a diameter of more than 10 inches in it. The blood and flesh around the wound were still melting away after the beam of light had dissipated.

After being struck by Eliard's spell, Earl Andal's body immediately lost its balance. Like a kite whose string had snapped, he collapsed to the ground and hit the wall. The old man's neck snapped, and his head rolled on the ground limply.

Even in such a state, he was still barely alive. He raised his head unsteadily and stared at Eliard with a cold sneer on his bloodstained face. "Not bad, but you're alone here. Even if you kill me, how will you escape from Full Moon City?"

Saying this, Earl Andal let out his last breath. From his mouth drifted a faint green mist. This was usually what would happen whenever a possessed body expired.

Eliard heaved a long sigh. Even after killing Earl Andal, the sense of urgency in him intensified even more.

He heard footsteps and shouts coming from outside the window.

"Someone has killed the dean!"

"Apprehend him, quick!"

"We'll kill him on the spot!"

The shouts sent a chill down Eliard's spine. He knew that those shouting outside the window were possessed by the Ethereal creatures. How else would they have known that the dean was dead without even setting foot in his room?

If the ones coming for him were ordinary Magicians, Eliard would be able to eliminate them all without breaking a sweat. But these were Ethereal Warriors he was dealing with. Link had told him that Ethereal Warriors were endowed with special abilities. In large numbers, they could easily rival a Legendary master's power.

They had laid out this trap especially for Link. Eliard was heavily outmatched. The only thing he could do right now was flee!

A great number of people had gathered outside the building. He needed to get out of there before it was too late. Eliard quickly took out the communication rune and was ready to leave.

Just then, he put the runestone back inside his pocket. "Do I really need to ask for Link's help to deal with this? I'll be looked down on by him. No, I need to think of a way to get myself out of this and resolve this business in Southmoon Kingdom by myself."

In a flash, Eliard had come up with an escape route in his mind. He rushed into the room in long strides and then waved his wand midway. Earl Andal's corpse floated into the air. At the same time, Eliard extended a hand towards the window and activated the Magician's Hand, which swung the window wide open.

"Go to hell!" Eliard swished his wand again, and Earl Andal's body soared out of the window.

Just as the corpse left the window, a huge number of spells struck it in mid-air. Apparently, the people outside had mistaken the corpse for a fleeing Eliard.

Taking advantage of the confusion, Eliard cast a Traceless Invisibility spell and ran out towards the Mage Tower's spiral staircase.

As he descended, he could hear many footsteps coming from below the staircase. The magic wand in his hand twitched, and he cast a Conjuring spell on himself: Tangible Illusion.

The illusion ran back up towards the top of the tower, while Eliard, who had remained invisible, leaned back motionlessly against a wall.

A few seconds later, a group of people ran up the stairs without noticing Eliard.

When everyone had rushed past him, Eliard continued his path down the staircase. Before long, he reached a great hall. There were four people in it. Unlike the rest who had gone up the tower, they stood guard in the hall in a composed manner.

When Eliard appeared, one of them suddenly turned towards him. The other three, who had been oblivious to Eliard's presence, turned to look at him as well, as if the four of them were psychically linked to one another.

Eliard quickly realized that he had been spotted. Without bothering to recast his concealment, he made his first move and waved his wand, shouting, "Freeze!"

A golden mist erupted from his wand and settled on the four of them. A golden film of vapor condensed on every one of them. They were all immobilized in an instant.

Eliard then cast another spell: Sunlight Acceleration.

His body trembled violently, as a golden light engulfed his body. At a glance, he now resembled a small sun, which burst out of the Mage Tower at blinding speed and into the courtyard outside.

Along the way, Eliard looked towards the garden villa nearby that served as the base camp of Ferde's diplomatic envoy.

Should I trust Amir? thought Eliard. Then another thought surfaced in his mind. Of course, Link must have prepared some countermeasure to prevent Ethereal possession. Amir should be alright!

At this thought, he then turned and sped towards the garden villa.

Eliard saw Amir standing at the entrance with an agitated look. When he saw Eliard, Amir shouted, "Master, what's going on?"

"Many have been possessed by evil spirits in the Magic Academy, including the dean. And I've just killed him."

Without even doubting his words, Amir said, "Quick, let's get inside, the villa has a defensive magic circle around it!"

When Eliard rushed into the courtyard, Amir instantly activated the defensive magic circle. Eliard noticed that the magic circle was only Level-5. He immediately halted in his tracks and said, "No, a Level-5 magic circle won't be enough! I'll hold them off, go gather everyone... ah, you..."

Eliard suddenly noticed that Amir's face had contorted peculiarly. Startled, he dodged sideways. From the corner of his eyes, he saw that Amir had pulled out a dagger from behind. The dagger sliced through the air fast and was already inches away from stabbing through his heart.

He would not be able to dodge the attack in time.

# Chapter 525

## Time to Do Something Big

Grinth Magic Academy

Whoosh. With a soft sound, an arrow emitting fiery red light suddenly flew from afar and crashed against the dagger.

Almost at the same time, a creamy white shield of sacred power appeared on Eliard.

Clang. The dagger was hit by the arrow and flew backwards. The blade cut across the sacred light, creating a flash like fireworks. Then the sacred shield flashed a few times and disappeared.

Eliard was terrified. The dagger's blade was so sharp. If not for the shield, he would have been dead even if the dagger was forced to the side.

But who had saved him?

Eliard looked to the distance and saw three people appear. He knew one of them—Skinorse. The other two were a female priest and an archer. They must have been the people who'd saved him.

During this distraction, Magician Amir acted again. His wand twitched, and the dagger on the ground lit up again. The next moment, the dagger jumped like lightning, stabbing toward Eliard again.

Shocked, he reacted immediately.

Someone was faster than him. The archer had pulled his bow back already. With a soft sound, a beam of fiery light shot over. Poof. It buried into Amir's head.

Amir flew back. Green mist floated out of his body when he was in the air.

"Hey, Eliard, what are you waiting for? Come here!" Skinorse waved at him.

"Ah, okay." Eliard had just escaped from death. With no time to feel the fear, he activated Cat's Agility and bounded towards Skinorse.

Halfway there, voices sounded behind him.

"He's there, Magician Eliard from Ferde. He killed the dean!"

"Catch the murderer!"

He even heard some Magician's Apprentices run out from the garden villa, yelling, "He killed Amir! He's the killer!"

Everything shocked Eliard even more. It felt like he was stuck in a pit of vipers. He could no longer tell who was innocent and who was a viper.

Ethereals are so scary! He sped up and ran to Skinorse.

Skinorse immediately pulled out some metal clumps the size of one's fist from somewhere. Throwing it at the pursuing soldiers, he yelled, "Turn around; don't look!"

Eliard immediately turned back. Then he heard some empty bangs. They sounded like toilet seats being opened. And then he felt heat on his back while the entire square turned really, really bright. It felt like a sun had dropped down behind him.

After that, Eliard heard pained cries.

"Ah, my eyes, my eyes!"

"I can't see anything, ah!"

"Despicable!"

Skinorse grabbed Eliard. "It's a bit troublesome. Let's go."

Eliard didn't have a better plan. He could only follow Skinorse and run out of the academy. At the wall, the people leapt up. Eliard had Cat's Agility activated and also jumped up.

There was a small alley behind the wall, filled with cottony white fog. Skinorse and the others jumped down without hesitation. Eliard hesitated a bit, but Skinorse tugged

his shirt. He lost balance and fell into the white fog too.

Once inside, Eliard realized that the fog was strange. It was like cotton, but there was a hole that could only fit one person. Eliard discovered a Magician there. He led the way while saying, "Hurry, walk faster. This spell can only last three minutes. Hurry!"

Soon, Eliard found even more interesting points to this spell. The fog almost completely blocked the outside world. Not even a sound could be heard, let alone power auras. They were just inside fog, but it felt like they were isolated from the world.

He followed behind the archer and walked down the tunnel in the fog. After who knew how long, he found that he was in a room. After that, he seemed to enter a cellar.

Boom. There was the sound of a wooden lid closing. The white fog disappeared, and Eliard found himself in an underground tunnel.

"This is the escape tunnel of the Gale Mercenary Group in Full Moon City. We're borrowing it," Skinorse explained.

Eliard felt speechless. So this wasn't theirs?

The tunnel was cramped and low with damp stone walls on either side. Eliard stooped down and walked for half an hour. By the end, he didn't even know where he was. All he was sure about was that they should be outside the city.

After five or six minutes, Morrigan slowed down at the front. "The exit is up ahead," he whispered. "There's a small village outside the city. Most villagers have something to do with the Gale Mercenary Group. We can't disturb them easily. Their leader is a Level-8 Assassin. He's really powerful. We'll use an Invisibility spell later. Make sure you don't get discovered."

This was targeted at Eliard. He quickly replied, "Don't worry. I'll be careful." With that, he cast a Traceless spell on everyone present.

Morrigan chuckled. "Heh, this spell is nice. Much better than my Invisibility. Let's go, we're at the exit."

Eliard looked forward. He found a puddle of water before him with light shining down. This was probably a dried well.

"Alright, climb up. Eliard, do you need help?" Skinorse asked.

"No, it's easy," Eliard replied. When the others were out, he cast a Levitation spell and used the Magician's Hand to pick himself out.

They climbed out of the well and into the alley. It was empty, but people passed to and fro outside. It was very lively. They didn't waste any time and rushed into the woods behind the village under the help of the Traceless spell.

Once deep in the woods, they became visible again and let out exhaled deeply. Finally, Skinorse said, "Hey, Eliard, I heard them earlier saying you killed the dean. Is that true?"

"Yes." Eliard smiled wryly and nodded.

Morrigan didn't understand. "I heard that Andal is a great person. Did he piss you off?"

Archer Irvan was more troubled. "Andal is an important figure. We're in trouble now."

Eliard sighed again. Ethereals were so scary. "Listen, things aren't so simple."

The four looked to him, ready to hear his explanation.

Eliard first looked to Irvan. "First, thanks. You and that priest saved me. I'm Eliard, a Magician from Ferde. And you?"

Everyone introduced themselves. After learning all their names, Eliard said, "Irvan, didn't you find something strange about the guy you killed?"

Irvan thought back and nodded. "A bit. Green smoke came out of his mouth when he did. I've never seen that before."

"Yes, it's the green smoke. When I killed the dean, that also happened. This smoke means that the person was taken over by an Ethereal. Do you understand?"

"Ethereal? From the Soul Realm?" Priest Moya furrowed her brows. She was highly sensitive to this term.

Eliard shook his head. "Not the Soul Realm but the Isomerism Realm. The dean was taken over by an Ethereal and wanted to kill me. I was forced to fight back. Many



people in the academy are possessed. The entire royal family might be possessed too. So basically, we're in trouble."

The four stared at each other at this. They didn't know what to say.

After a long while, Skinorse said, "According to what you said, we've just angered a beehive?"

Morrigan gritted his teeth. "This is troublesome. Not only did we not get money, but we're also wanted by the kingdom now."

Irvan scratched his head too. "Eliard, how about we escort you back to Ferde? We'll be safe there."

Eliard quickly shook his head. "No, no, no. I'm not going back. I have to solve this and find the mastermind behind all this. From what I know, Ethreals need a Secret Magician's help to possess someone. I must find and kill him. Otherwise, Southmoon Kingdom will become a blight to the south of Ferde and Norton.

Hearing this, Skinorse shrugged. "Alright," he said helplessly. "I knew the lord wouldn't give such a simple mission. We'll have to work now."

"What lord?" Eliard was confused.

Beside them, Moya explained, "We met the Ferde lord in another city. He gave us this mission to come help you."

Hearing this, Eliard felt warm inside. He knew Link must have prepared for this. "Did he say where he'll be?" he asked.

"No," Skinorse replied. "He said that he'd be busy with something."

"Good. We'll take care of this." Eliard waved a fist. He was a Level-8 Magician now. He couldn't stay cooped up in the safe Mage Tower; it was time to do something big.

"If you insist, then let's do it. But what do you plan on doing?" Skinorse asked.

Eliard had thought of this. "I heard there are robbers outside the city. I think there's something up with them. They must be related to the Ethereals. If I was that Secret Magician, I wouldn't hide inside Full Moon City because that's not safe. It's highly

possible to meet a Legendary Magician. I'd definitely hide outside the city. Those robbers must know something."

"Oh, I see. So you're saying that we have to avoid Southmoon's capture while fighting with those robbers. This is a classic example of finding trouble for yourself." Skinorse looked frustrated. The source of all this trouble was that he didn't mind his own business and wanted to help his friend. What had he been thinking?

"What, are you scared?" Eliard glanced at Skinorse, his gaze falling on the man's dagger. "Your dagger looks nice. Crystal-red, high light refraction... it's Level-10 material. Link must have given it to you as a prepayment. You don't want to work after getting paid?"

Skinorse slapped his forehead and muttered, "I hate Magicians."

# Chapter 526

## An Ethereal's Use

An hour after Eliard fled the Magic Academy, wanted posters had been distributed throughout the city. Wanted posters with a portrait of Eliard had been plastered everywhere throughout the streets. The bounty put on him was even more ludicrous: 5000 gold pieces. Every poster bore the seals of the Magic Academy and Southmoon Kingdom.

The capture of one person for such an extravagant amount of gold pieces seemed easier and far more rewarding than going after those slippery bandits. At that point, the mercenaries in the city had all given up on the bandits' bounty and now began their search for this wanted felon.

Naturally, Link heard about the bounty as well.

He was strolling along the street leisurely when he heard the news. Immediately, he turned around and headed for the Magic Academy. Eliard had slain Andal and Amir... I fear the Ethereal crisis in Southmoon Kingdom is even worse than I had imagined.

The Magic Academy could be seen from Full Moon City. By simply raising one's head up, one could easily see in the distance the Magic Academy's Mage Tower of Enlightenment.

After walking for half an hour, Link reached the outer walls of Grinth Magic Academy. From there, he searched around him for an isolated corner. A translucent film rippled across his entire body, which gradually began to fade till he was gone completely from sight. He had slipped into the vacuum of space. Link had just recently invented this technique, which was similar to the Demon Illusory Assassins' racial trait.

Compared to the Demon Illusory Assassin, Link's spell was much more flexible and stealthier. It was essentially one of the most effective Invisibility spells in the realm of Firuman.

In his current state, Link was like a fish at the bottom of a shallow pond, observing the outside world through a thin layer of water.

Without even moving an inch from where he stood, Link was able to have a full view of what was going on within Grinth Magic Academy through the light-refracting property of space.

Behind the walls of the Magic Academy, Link could see that each Magician's face was tense and alert as if expecting an enemy attack at any moment. A magic light shone from the peak of the Mage Tower of Enlightenment. Link recognized it as a large-scale detection spell usually cast to seek out intruders.

With the Magic Academy's dean and Ferde's envoy killed, Link had expected such a heightened level of caution. However, after observing this for a while, he began to sense that something was not right, but he could not find the words to describe what it was.

Calmly, his view shifted to the two corpses that had been put away.

Link knew both of them. One belonged to Andal, who had visited Ferde a few times. There was a huge hole that had been recently burned through his chest. Carefully observing it, Link recognized it as a wound consistent with a Radiant Sunbeam spell. This must have been Eliard's handiwork. The other body was Amir. He was one of Ferde's official Magicians. It was a shame to have lost him as well. There was a hole on Amir's head. From the shape of the hole, Link deduced that he must have been struck by an arrow.

Must have been shot down by Eagle Eye Irvan. From the look of things, Skinorse had met up with Eliard. Good. Link was relieved, knowing that Eliard was now with Skinorse and his entourage of experience adventurers.

He continued observing the two corpses.

On the surface, nothing odd stood out from the two bodies. Link could not even detect any residual aura from them. This was fine, as he still had his Assassin's Vision of Truth up his sleeve.

Link activated his Legendary eye mask's special effect. A sudden change came over his vision. What had been a perfectly normal Magic Academy before was now filled with hazy hues of color.

The Magicians inside all radiated with various colors of light, representing the energies that resided within their bodies. Most of the Magicians' energies seemed

normal, but there were a few whose bodies were giving off an extremely faint green energy. Traces of the energy were mingled with the Magicians' normal energies, making them almost difficult to perceive.

Moreover, a fine thread of green light connected two of these Magicians that exhibited such an abnormality.

Link looked at the corpses. He could see the same green light from them, the only difference being that the light had ceased all activity and was now in a state of stagnation.

"It seems that they were possessed by Ethereals and had transformed into Ethereal Warriors. Also, they seem to be connected to each other in such a way that they are all aware of each other's condition at any given time."

This was the first time he had encountered Ethereal Warriors in the real world. They had definitely piqued his curiosity.

In the game world, it was possible to exorcize an Ethereal from a body with the right method. There were in total two such methods. The first one was to treat an Ethereal as a malevolent spirit and cast a powerful exorcizing spell to expel it out of its host body. The other method was to treat it as a type of toxin and concoct an antidote through alchemy to disrupt the material basis for its possession. Without a solid basis, the Ethereal would be forced out of its host body.

Link had planned to capture one of these Ethereal Warriors and to study it himself. However, from the looks of things now, if he were to act imprudently, the other Ethereal Warriors would immediately be alerted to his presence, and he would lose the element of surprise as a result.

He still did not know what the Ethereals were scheming. If he were to be spotted, there would be a mass hysteria within the academy walls.

He needed to think of something to quietly abduct one of the Ethereal Warriors.

As he pondered his next course of action, he suddenly noticed that an Ethereal Magician had stepped out of the Magic Academy and got on a horse carriage. He then trotted off towards the city gates.

Link saw his opportunity and followed the carriage, his Vision of Truth still activated

along the way.

Half an hour later, the carriage had reached the city gates to the city's south. At that moment, Link realized that the green thread connecting the Ethereal Magician with the other Ethereals had become faint.

When the carriage left Full Moon City, the green thread had dissipated completely.

The mutual energy link between the Ethereals probably has a limit of 2000 feet, thought Link. Now that Ethereal Magician has isolated himself from the rest, it's time to act.

With a burst of Dragon Power, Link activated Instant Flash and tore a hole through space.

In an instant, he had teleported himself inside the carriage. The Ethereal Magician's eyes went wide, caught off guard by his appearance. He began to raise his wand, but Link did not give him any chance to react. He managed to grab the Magician by his head and cast a spatial seal on him with a rush of power through his fingers.

This technique was also something Link had come up with recently. It was intended to freeze space around its target, effectively encasing it in a spatial bubble.

With a soft ting, the Ethereal Magician went rigid like a statue. His body looked the same still. However, ensnared completely within the spatial bubble, the Magician was now rendered incapable of all movement and oblivious to his surroundings.

To him, the outside world had stopped moving. Time had also frozen completely around him. His body was wrapped beneath a one-inch crystalline layer, which was the result of Link's Dragon Power freezing space around the Ethereal Magician. Frozen space was also known as spatial crystal. Link had acted with such speed and lightness that the driver outside did not notice what had just occurred inside the carriage.

Link rapped at the carriage's window with a finger and said in a low voice, "Hey, stop here."

"Is there something wrong, boss?" asked the driver.

Link softly sucked in his breath and let his Dragon Power flow into his voice. He then activated a Secret spell: Incite.

He had learned it from Eleanor. It was only a Level-2 spell, and it could only be used on human beings. Though its effect resembled hypnotism, it was more potent than the latter. The spell's target would still behave normally while being made to forget a few things in the process.

"Now, keep on going west without stopping until you reach Dunwall City 100 miles away. Then, find an inn to stay there for a month. Understand?"

"Understood." The driver's voice sounded absent.

"There was no one here in your carriage. You have been traveling alone all this time. There are 20 gold pieces in your pouch, given to you by the Magicians in the Academy. For safety reasons, you have kept it hidden beneath the wooden planks of your carriage." Saying this, Link took out 20 gold pieces and placed them inside a box in the carriage.

"Yes, no passengers. I had enough money with me as well," the driver repeated.

After judging that the level of suggestion he had placed on the driver should be enough for now, Link grabbed the frozen Ethereal Magician and with a flash of white light, teleported themselves into the woods a few thousand feet away.

In the woods, Link found a shady spot. He raised a hand, and the soil beneath him instantly surged up to form a 10-square-foot stone hut. Once inside the hut, Link erased the door outside with the force of his will. The hut's appearance changed as well, transforming into a relatively normal-looking hill. Inside the hut, a stone platform floated from the ground. A ball of light appeared near the ceiling, illuminating the hut's interior.

Link laid the Ethereal Magician on the platform and tapped a finger on his body. With another ting, the frozen space melted around him and began flowing normally. The statue had come back to life.

His thoughts were paused at the moment when they were still back in the carriage. When he woke up, he swished his wand, ready to retaliate.

The next moment, Link sensed a peculiar aura coming from the Ethereal Magician's body. His surprise then turned to joy.

This was due to the fact that the Ethereal Magician seemed to be capable of using Time

Power.

Ethereals possessed an assortment of abilities, other than body possession. They could also be used for an even crueler purpose: the manufacturing of Ethereal Crystals. An Ethereal Crystal was a magical item that contained an Ethereal's unique traits and properties.

Right now, the Ethereal was ready to use its Time Power. Link would be able to craft an Ethereal Crystal if he could find a way to extract the Ethereal from the Magician's body.

This would be of great benefit to his research on Time Power.



# Chapter 527

## Ethereal Time Crystal

Stone house in the woods

As soon as the Ethereal Warrior moved, there was a crisp ding in the air. Two 20-centimeter-long, silver-white daggers shot out from his arms. His entire arm changed strangely.

The daggers were strange too. The material looked like crystal while rings of silver runes wrapped around it. It was intimidating.

"Blade of Time: Fate! Die!"

As this guy roared, he crossed his arms and went into the attack position. His body turned into an illusory streak that shot towards Link.

This incredible speed was equivalent to that of a Level-8 Assassin. Paired with the power of time, basically anyone under the Legendary level would be helpless against him. Even a Legendary figure might be caught by surprise and be at a disadvantage when faced with a time attack.

But it was ineffective against Link.

He'd faced the Spear of Victory from the Nagas before. The time power within that spear was far greater than this Ethereal Magician. The Dragon King's Fury sword could slice apart this type of casual attack. He wouldn't need much more effort when faced with this weaker attack.

When the silver Blade of Time reached him, Link didn't even bother to use a spell. He just blocked it with his sword.

Cling, clang, cling. There were a few consecutive hits. Link could easily block the Ethereal Warrior's silver-white dagger with only a bit of his strength.

After blocking three moves in a row, he sped up with the fourth move. When the

opponent switched to another move, he swept his sword over.

Thud. There was a muffled sound as he slapped the opponent's chest. His strength was just enough to force the Ethereal back.

"Argh!" the Ethereal Warrior roared, wanting to charge again.

"Enough, stop fooling around."

Link was too lazy to mess with him. The moment the other moved, Link stuck his left hand out. Semi-transparent ripples appeared in the air and crashed towards the Ethereal like a tidal wave. When it reached the Ethereal, it turned into four circular shackles that wrapped around him and lifted him to the sky.

The Ethereal Warrior struggled but to no avail.

Of course, his ability with time was very unique. He'd even surpassed the understanding of some Legendary Warriors, but that was it. He was like a regular man with an assault rifle. He had a powerful weapon but was still just an average person. A truly powerful opponent could easily defeat him.

Coincidentally, Link was that type of powerful opponent. His Dragon King's Fury sword was an even better "assault rifle." Under this situation, there was no way the Ethereal Warrior could win.

Using his mind, Link nudged the spatial shackles. The Ethereal Warrior in the sky was dragged to the stone platform and prostrated.

"Who are you?" The Ethereal Warrior was so shocked. Link had changed completely now and looked like a regular mercenary, so the Ethereal couldn't recognize him.

Link obviously wouldn't answer. He walked up and jabbed the Ethereal's head, neck, limbs, waist, and other places. Semi-transparent spatial shackles popped out of nowhere to anchor and immobilize the person on the stone.

"What are you doing?!" The Ethereal had a bad feeling.

Link tapped his mouth to shut it. "Quiet."

"Mmmm, mmm!" The Ethereal's shock and terror grew heavier. He struggled with all

his might, but it was in vain.

Link ignored him. He walked over and flipped the man's eyelids to check his eyes. The possessed Magician had deep blue eyes that were actually quite pretty. Of course, Link wasn't appreciating his eyes. He studied the deep blue orbs and saw faint green light deep inside.

"Aha, so there are abnormal signs." Link chuckled.

If Ethereals really wanted to hide, they could do it quite well. The possessed basically wouldn't have any visible signs. Link had to use the Vision of Truth to find abnormalities before. After looking closely, he realized that even a regular person could discover what was amiss.

The Ethereal was even more terrified. His pupils constricted to a point.

Link ignored him. To him, the Ethereal in this Magician's body was something to be eradicated and used. There was no pity to be had.

He didn't know the Secret spell to drive away the Ethereal, but he could use alchemy. Thinking of this, Link stepped back. He grabbed downward, and Dragon Power surged out. Another boulder rose up from the ground. He started taking out all his alchemy tools one by one, placing them neatly on the stone.

"Mmm, mhm!" The Ethereal struggled crazily, but it was no use. Before Link, his strength was like an ant's.

First, Link pulled out a small knife and sliced the Magician's arm. He let out half a cup of blood and started testing for its attributes.

The foundation of an Ethereal's existence is in the host's blood. This was what an alchemist from the Southern Magician Alliance said in the game. Of course, it was a game, so the master just explained it that simply.

Before, it would have been useless even if Link knew about this. Now, his attainments in alchemy were comparable to that master alchemist. He only needed this breakthrough point; everything else was easy.

Cling, cling, clang, clang. After a bunch of noises, Link completed the blood test ten minutes later. A thin layer of blue appeared on the bottom of the crystal cup. He sniffed

it; it smelled like garlic. He shook it and discovered the liquid was viscous. At closer inspection, it glowed faintly too.

Link extinguished the magic light on the ceiling. Now, the glow was even more obvious. The blue viscous liquid under the light glowed green in the dark. Through this light green glow, Link could see the physical attributes of the liquid even more clearly. Paired with the previous test, he knew what the liquid was made up of.

"It's a Soul Drug made with mink, thorn flower, and gold antlers, right?"

He saw the Ethereal Warrior shudder and Link knew instantly that he was right.

Smiling, he continued, "Using the Soul Drug to repress the host's soul is a good idea. Sadly, you can't do it yourself. It must be the trick of some Secret Magician. Where is he? Can you tell me?"

As he spoke, he loosened the shackles on the Ethereal. He immediately shook his head and exclaimed, "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Answer my question!" Link said harshly.

The Ethereal Warrior shuddered. He felt great pressure come from the Soul Realm. It felt like he was a candle facing a hurricane. If he tried to resist it, he would immediately shatter into pieces.

"I won't say it... I won't say it." He gritted his teeth; his consciousness was wavering already.

"Fine. I'll find him anyway. But first, let me take care of you."

"What are you—"

Before he could finish, his mouth was sealed again. Link picked up more alchemy material and went to work. Half an hour later, he'd concocted dark yellow liquid with a sharp odor. The liquid bubbled, looking like horse piss.

"Yeah, it doesn't smell good, but it should get rid of Soul Drug."

Link carried the cup of yellow liquid to the Ethereal Warrior. He pointed at the man's mouth, and the force field there opened his mouth. The Ethereal's muscles kept

shaking; he was still struggling even though it was useless.

Ten seconds later, the cup had emptied down his throat. Ten more seconds later, he started trembling uncontrollably. As he shook, green smoke expanded from his body.

The smoke spread for more than ten minutes. Then a shadow appeared above the body like something rushing out of it.

It was obvious that this thing was doing everything to stay inside the Magician's body. But without the Soul Drug's restrictive effect, the Magician's own soul was waking up and forcing the invader out.

Link was well-prepared. He took out a colorless fist-sized crystal. This was a Soul Crystal that Eleanor gave him specifically to store souls. As long as it wasn't used to store souls of intelligent beings, this crystal was part of the field of Secret Magic. If he went past that, it would become black magic.

Now, Link was using it against an Ethereal from another realm. This was a gray area. Technically, he'd stepped over the boundary, but this guy was an invader so it should be fine.

Dragon Power surged into the crystal, and it emitted an attractive force. The illusory shadow on the Magician was sucked towards the crystal.

It struggled so hard, but it was to no avail. Five seconds later, it was completely inside the crystal. The crystal had also turned silver-white, just like the Ethereal's Blade of Time.

The crystal wasn't flesh, after all. It couldn't provide the energy or environment needed for operation. Thus, the soul could only exist quietly inside the crystal.

Link added some Dragon Power in to test the soul's other structures. Three minutes later, he found the part with time.

Haha, this is nice.

Link poured Dragon Power into this structure. An instant later, the silver-white light glowed around the crystal. Rings of overlapping runes appeared in the glow. The aura of time thickened in the air. It was just like when he'd used the Blade of Time.

The world's imagination is boundless, Link couldn't help but lament. An organism can evolve to have such a peculiar type of power.

At this time, the Magician that had been possessed moaned from the stone. He was about to wake up. Link put the Ethereal time crystal away and walked up, waiting patiently for the Magician to awaken.

He should be able to provide a lot of valuable information.

# Chapter 528

## The Prodigy That Rivalled Eliard

In the stone hut, the Magician who had been lying on the stone platform finally woke up.

"Oh... where am I? How did I get here?" He rubbed his forehead, his brows bunched up in a frown. At times, his body would shake involuntarily like a leaf. He must not be feeling well at all.

Link was sitting beside the stone platform. When the Magician had woken up, Link quickly said, "Easy now, you're safe."

The Magician sat up and stared at Link. He did not recognize the scruffy-looking mercenary sitting beside him. Confused, he asked, "And you are?"

"Just your everyday busybody," replied Link casually. He then added, "You were possessed by an evil spirit. I expelled it from your body. You should be able to feel its absence from your body."

"Expelled from my... you know magic?" The Magician surveyed Link from tip to toe. His surroundings seemed unreal to him. At the moment, he was more intrigued by Link's presence than his own current condition.

Link did not respond. He continued asking, "Do you not feel that you have just woken up from a terribly vivid dream?"

Despite not answering his question directly, the mercenary did not seem to harbor any ill intentions. The Magician had no choice but to repress his curiosity and rake through his brain for his most recent memories. He nodded. "Yeah, I think so. In the dream, I did many... many terrible things. Oh god, did I really do these things?"

Realization quickly dawned on the Magician.

"No, that wasn't you. Rather, it was the evil spirit who had taken possession of you, but I've already exorcized it from your body." Link paused for a moment and stared at the

Magician. He then said, "You probably should know that you weren't the only one being controlled by these evil spirits. These spirits were no ordinary entities, they're extremely intelligent, and they seem to work in coordination with one another. I need to know what these spirits are up to now."

According to the natural laws of Firuman, Ethereals were classified as a type of incorporeal entities. They usually did not retain their own memories in them. Instead, they would store their memories in their hosts' minds. After being ejected from a body, an Ethereal would leave behind its memories in its previous host. He or she would be able to recall these memories if they dug deep enough.

This was the Ethereal Warrior's biggest weaknesses.

The Magician pressed his head against a hand, trying to recall his dream. After a few minutes, he grabbed his head in both hands and moaned out in pain. He began tossing and turning on the platform. "Argh, no, I can't do it. My head feels like it's about to split open..."

The Eliards voice went hoarse. His eyes were protruding from their sockets. Blue veins began appearing across his face, and he was biting on his lower lip until it bled.

Link frowned at the sight of this. He drew out the Dragon King's Fury sword and swung it a few times in the air. Hum, hum... An almost inaudible sound rang out in the air as if the sword had sliced through something invisible. When this was over, the Magician's face had relaxed somewhat. He lay on the platform, grasping his head in his hands while taking in huge gulps of air.

"What just happened?" asked Link.

"I don't know. I was trying to recall the things that had happened before. I did remember a few things, and then my memory... no, my entire mind was invaded by a huge black shadow. It told me that I was dead. And then there was pain."

"Black shadow?" Link frowned. After thinking for a while, he suddenly stepped forth and pressed his hand on the Magician's body, feeling for something. After that, he turned his body around, so that the Magician was now lying face-down on the platform. He then lifted the Magician's shirt up behind him.

The Magician was around 30 years old. His Level-4 power meant that he must be among the upper middle-class members of the Magic Academy. His skin was a delicate



white. However, a purple rune had been imprinted on his skin at the midsection of his spine.

The rune was shaped like an eye. As Link had already severed the connection between the rune and its caster, the rune now remained dark. This, however, did not affect Link's ability to discern its purpose.

He wiped at it with a hand. The rune peeled itself off the Magician's back and floated in the air.

The Magician lifted his head and was startled to see the rune. "What is this?"

"Shadow Eye. The evil spirit that was possessing your body had activated the rune before it left your body. The rune's caster would be able to shatter your memory and even your soul through it."

Saying this, Link looked at the Magician. "How do you feel now? Can you remember anything from before?"

"I'll try." The Magician was still unnerved by all this, especially what this nameless mercenary had done before him. But this was not the time to whine. He calmed himself down and tried to recall his dream again.

"Most of the memories have been erased... I see the king, the queen, the dean, all of them were my compatriots... wait, I also see a Magician. I only saw her once. She was wearing an emerald robe and a cape. She held a magic wand. The wand was strange. A green crystal was set on its tip. It looked almost like jade. Around it floated two smaller crystals. The three crystals were tied to each other by strands of energy. These smaller crystals orbited the wand continuously..."

Hearing this, Link's brows furrowed. The wand's description sounded familiar to him. The name of the wand that matched the Magician's description popped up in his head, and he even knew its user. But this was Southmoon Kingdom; what was she doing here?

This made no sense. The person he had in mind should be on the Isle of Dawn.

Stumped, Link asked, "Do you remember what the Magician looked like?"

The Magician thought for a while, then shook his head. "The memory's foggy... wait, I

remember her hair. It was a dark red. Her hair shimmered, and it looked almost transparent. It was also soft to the touch, like dark red water. I can't really find the words to describe her hair texture. I've never seen anything like it before."

Hearing this, Link was now sure of the female Magician's identity. He let out a sigh. "Who would have thought that she would betray the Isle of Dawn? There could be trouble soon."

The World Tree grew on the Isle of Dawn. The tree was approximately Level-19. Under the suppressive aura it gave off, the island was able to maintain its peace, at least on the surface.

However, where there were people, there was also strife. The Isle of Dawn was no exception to this rule.

In the game world, there was a mixed-blood High Elf living on the Isle of Dawn called Evelina. Royal High Elf blood flowed in one half of her body, while the other half contained pure Dragon blood. Two of the most ancient and powerful blood circulated through her body, combining to form a completely new power: Nature-Dragon Power.

This power was strange as it was potent. Despite being a mixed-blood, as Evelina's mother also happened to be the High Elf princess, she was forced to reside on the Isle of Dawn. Even as part of royalty, she was bombarded by contempt and disdain for not being of pure blood. She had even earned the moniker "half-breed" among her peers.

If Evelina was any other person, she would probably shrug off the constant insults and name-calling. But she was extremely talented, even more so than Bryant's niece, who had been killed by the God of Destruction. At 30 years old, she had already reached Level-9. At 33 years old, she was able to enter the Legendary Realm. She had most likely become a Legendary master by now.

Not only was she powerful, the woman was a reasonable person.

She did not leave the Isle of Dawn out of anger after having endured years of discrimination. Rather, it was due to the fact that she knew that she would not be able to make a name for herself on the Isle of Dawn as a mixed-blood. She would be ostracized forever if she were to remain there. This was not what she wanted, and so she decided to leave the island.

In the game world, Evelina did not side with any other power. She was simply a

wandering heroine character. However, in this world, she was now aiding the Syndicate. This could be troublesome.

Evelina was a true genius. Her strength came from her intellect and resolve. In the game, she was one of the few who could rival Eliard in terms of physical beauty.

Though Link was a Legendary master himself, in the face of such talent, he could not help but feel anxious.

He was not sure whether he would be able to beat Evelina. Unless the difference between their power levels was huge, the only way to know who would win in a battle between two Legendary masters was to actually let them fight it out.

At this, Link said to the Magician, "You should know what we're up against right now. The higher-ups of Full Moon City have been possessed by evil spirits. You are now free to go as you please, but only death awaits you if you choose to return to Full Moon City."

"I know. I'm not ready to go back. The South is not under the protection of any strong masters. It's just too dangerous. My safest option would be to take refuge in Ferde." The Magician had decided on his destination.

"Be my guest. Goodbye." Link took a step backwards. The stone wall behind him split into two halves, opening up a door. He stepped through it and disappeared from the Magician's line of sight.

With Evelina's involvement in this matter, Eliard would not be able to deal with all this on his own. Link needed to group up with him, immediately.

# Chapter 529

## You Two Have Fun

In the woods

Eliard, Skinorse, and Irvan hid behind a 15-foot-tall boulder. Eliard cast a water mirror and carefully watched the camp on the other side.

This temporary camp was set in a cave. Through the water mirror, they could see that there were some bedrolls and wooden buckets inside. There were three people, all 20-something youths. One of them seemed injured and was resting in a corner. Another sat on a rock and smoked while keeping guard. The last focused on whittling an arrow. He looked like an archer.

"Judging from the bedrolls and buckets, there should be around 30 robbers," Skinorse said. "The others probably went out. We can take advantage of this and capture them for interrogation."

Irvan had already pulled his arrows out. "Then let's hurry up. I'll kill one and leave the other two for questioning."

Eliard nodded. "Okay... wait, something feels wrong."

His wand was already out and glowing, but he suddenly motioned for them to stop. He canceled the water mirror and pressed against the stone without moving. This scared Skinorse and Irvan. The two went into defensive poses.

"What's wrong?"

"What happened?"

Eliard's eyes were fearful. "I don't know," he whispered. "But I feel depressed. My heart feels heavy, like something frightening will happen soon."

"Maybe you're overthinking." Irvan looked around but didn't see anything. The woods looked normal; there was nothing strange.

This showed that he was inexperienced. He hadn't cooperated with such powerful Magicians before and thought Eliard was just getting paranoid and scaring himself.

Skinorse didn't think this though. He knew that Magicians had great predictions. Morrigan was only at Level-5, but he often used his gut to lead Skinorse and Moya through the relics, helping them avoid much danger.

Eliard's power was practically equal to him. Such a powerful Magician wouldn't feel this depression for no reason. There must be something horrible coming.

"No need to explain," he said decisively. "Drop the mission and retreat!"

He turned to leave.

Unexpectedly, Eliard grabbed him. "Don't."

"What?" Skinorse was confused now. "Since it's dangerous, we can come back some other time. I didn't say to completely give up."

Eliard shook his head, smiling wryly. "It's not that simple. I don't think we can leave now."

"Someone's watching us?" Skinorse was shocked. "Can you sense him?"

"He must be nearby, watching us, but I can't sense where he is exactly. He's more powerful than me." Eliard had already taken out the runestone Link gave him. He decided that as soon as something went wrong, he would run and contact Link. Things were out of his control now.

Skinorse immediately curled up and swore. "F\*ck, if he's more powerful than you, then he's Legendary, isn't he? What the f\*ck. How come all the powerful guys are running around? How are people supposed to live?"

Eliard shook his head. "No, there actually aren't that many Legendary figures. There are more than one billion people in the world, but less than 20 people are over Level-10. We probably run into them because of Link."

Link had entered the Legendary level so his enemies would send someone at or above that level. Otherwise, it would be useless. However, they were only a few bigger ants between these two powerful figures.

Hearing this, Irvan grew anxious. "Hey, honestly, stop talking and think about what we should do now."

Eliard and Skinorse exchanged glances; both of their eyes were helpless. They shook their heads.

"I have no solutions. We can use the runestone to ask for help, but I think that we'll be dead before Link can get here." Eliard shrugged and smiled bitterly. The repressive feeling was getting worse. He had never felt something so strong before. The runestone could only notify Link but most likely couldn't save them.

"I guess we'll have to compete with patience. The enemy is watching us but hasn't done anything yet. He must have a plan. We'll just wait and see what he has planned." Skinorse decided to lean against the boulder and pulled a pipe out of his spatial ring. He knocked it against the boulder, cleared the ashes, and started adding tobacco.

His attitude was: I'm not your match so just do whatever you want.

Irvan hadn't given up though. He wasn't like Eliard and Skinorse. He'd heard about Legendary figures but had never experienced their strength. To him, they were just people but stronger. It wasn't like they could be immortal. If they fought to the death, they might still have a chance.

Thinking of that, he prepared his bow and looked side to side. His expression was serious and cautious; he was ready to put his all in.

Seeing him like this, Skinorse breathed in and exhaled a ring of smoke. "Irvan, do you have a pet?" he asked.

Irvan shook his head. "Who has time to do that?"

"Then do you have kids?" Skinorse continued.

"My wife was killed when she was pregnant." Irvan shook his head with a bitter expression.

Skinorse patted his shoulder and sighed. "If you've raised them before, you'd know that to a Legendary figure, you're just like his pet or son. If he wants to hit you, you take it. Don't think about fighting back. Here, copy me and have a smoke. Enjoy your last moments alive."

He passed the pipe over.

Irvan felt hopeless.

At this time, Eliard suddenly said, "Shh, don't say anything. Someone's coming."

The two mercenaries instantly sobered. At times like this, any change was a chance. They might have an opportunity. After all, they didn't want to die. Any shred of hope should be taken.

Eliard stopped using magic. He just sprawled on the boulder; Skinorse and Irvan did the same.

After a while, they saw a Magician with a dark green robe and hood appear by the cave. Judging by the figure, it was a woman. She was quite tall—almost six feet. Though she was covered in the long robe, she still had a great body.

To Eliard, the most eye-catching part about her was her wand. It was silver with three green crystals. Two small pieces orbited around the big one. The aura was as deep as the sea. Just a glance shocked him, making his heart pound and almost leap out of his throat.

Skinorse involuntarily looked again and praised, "Tsk, such great figure, great hips, great ass, great boobs, nice height too. And that hair looks good. I've never seen that color before. If she comes with me, I'll even be okay if she isn't that pretty."

Eliard was speechless. He grabbed the man over. "Do you want to die? I'm pretty sure she's the Legendary figure who was spying on us!"

Skinorse instantly shuddered. He retracted, feeling like he should slap himself. Irvan quietly scooted away from him, afraid he would be affected by the guy.

Scolding came from the cave.

"Are you all dead? Get up, all of you get up. You don't even know that people are watching."

The voice was sweet, like a little girl's, but also with the beauty of a mature woman. Skinorse listened to it and exhaled deeply. "Ah, I'm probably done for, but it's worth it to die in the hands of such a beauty."

Irvan couldn't take it anymore. "You bastard," he muttered. "Can't you be serious?" He didn't want to die yet.

In the cave, the three bandits were as submissive as rabbits. They hung their heads and didn't reply.

"Alright, get out. Go to Full Moon City and tell the king that plan A failed. Tell them to start plan B."

"Yes, yes, Master, understood." The three scurried away and disappeared deep into the woods.

The next moment, the female Magician pointed her wand towards where Eliard's group was hiding. The boulder they were leaning against popped and disappeared into a plume of smoke.

The three were revealed; they were completely helpless. This spell shocked all of them.

Red and green flashed on the woman, and she instantly shot forward 300 feet. Sixty feet away from the three, she looked at them and said in her laughing voice, "Oh, Ferde's Eliard. I really caught a big fish this time."

Eliard gulped. He regretted his lack of power now. He couldn't say anything useful, so he just kept quiet.

The woman looked to Skinorse. "I heard what you said. Thank you for your compliments. As an adventurer, you've had some great accomplishments."

Skinorse's lips curled up by habit into a smile that he thought was the most attractive. "I have a request before dying."

"What is it?"

"Let me see your face. Then I won't have any regrets," Skinorse said.

The woman burst into laughter. Her laugh was like wind chimes and was definitely ear candy. After laughing, she shook his head. "I'm sorry, but I must refuse."

Then she looked to Irvan. "A Level-7 archer. You're not bad either, but sadly, you three



still aren't strong enough..."

As she spoke, her wand twitched. Eliard gravitated towards her and quickly reached her side. She grabbed him like grabbing a chicken. Eliard couldn't fight back or even speak.

The female Magician looked at the other two and laughed. "Don't worry. You two won't die because I don't like useless murder. I'll keep you two alive to send Link a message. Tell him that if he wants to save Eliard, go to Grizzly Hills alone. Remember, he has to be alone. He can't have any helpers at all."

Hearing this, Skinorse let out a breath. "Don't worry, I'll tell him."

"I believe. But even though I won't kill you, I will still punish your impoliteness. You like women, don't you? I'll change your interests now."

With that, fragmented silver light shot out from her wand. It separated halfway through, one beam shooting at Skinorse, the other at Irvan.

The light didn't look too fast, but they couldn't defend themselves at all. They were hit simultaneously.

"Alright, you two go have fun."

She grabbed Eliard's arm. "Let's go. Don't worry, I won't let you die so easily."

After speaking, she stepped back and somehow teleported thousands of feet away. She paused, turned, and then disappeared into the woods.

Soon after they left, someone appeared in the woods. It was Link. Seeing Skinorse and Irvan, his brows furrowed.

Dazed and nude, they rolled around on the ground, moaning in each other's arms. It was not a delightful scene.

# Chapter 530

## The woods

With a soft bang, an explosion pulled apart Skinorse and Irvan from each other's arms.

But the two were still not sated. Once separated, they immediately scrambled back towards each other. It was as if there was a magnetic attraction pulling them together.

"Wake up!"

Link shouted, his voice infused with Dragon Power.

Hearing his voice, Skinorse and Irvan trembled, then stood there as the dazed expressions on their faces began to fade.

Skinorse was the first to regain his senses ten seconds later. Numbly, he turned around to observe his surroundings and saw the leather armor scattered around them. He looked at Irvan, who stood naked in front of him, and then at himself, who too was stripped of all clothing. He also noticed that there were traces of blood on his lower body. Whose blood was it?

He swallowed, then ran to pick up his armor without a word. As he put his armor on, he also managed to catch a glimpse of Irvan and saw that there were traces of blood as well between his thighs.

Skinorse gulped again. That spiteful woman! If anyone finds out about this, I can kiss my reputation goodbye!

At this point, Irvan had also woken up. He looked around at the mess around him and felt a slight ache in his rear. His brown face blushed furiously, realizing what had happened. Without a word, he strode around to pick up his leather armor and began putting it on.

Skinorse tried to explain himself. "Eagle Eye, I wasn't really feeling myself..."

An arrow shot out from Irvan in reply. Skinorse immediately dodged the arrow and

did not dare speak any further.

"If you so much as breathe a word about this to anyone, I'll kill you!" stammered Irvan.

Skinorse waved his hands in front of him. "I won't say a word. This is just too humiliating. I'm embarrassed about it as well."

"Alright, this was all just an accident." Link tried to calm the two of them down.

He asked, "Where's Eliard?"

"Eliard?" Skinorse was still a bit woozy. He then patted his head as his memory came back to him. "Eliard was kidnapped by that witch. She wanted you to go find her at Grizzly Hills in the South, alone, or else Eliard's life will be forfeit. Oh, and she had also ordered the bandits to go look for some king in Full Moon City. She said something about abandoning the first stage of their plan and moving on to the second stage."

"Looks like I've come a bit too late." Link frowned and pondered silently on this. He then said, "Come, we need to go to Full Moon City now. Whatever this second stage to their plan was, we have to stop them at all costs."

For the time being, the matter in Full Moon City took precedence over saving Eliard, whose life did not seem to be in any immediate danger. There was no telling what the bandits would do to the higher-ups of the city they were now holding hostage.

It was clear to Link that Evelina simply wanted to slow him down so that he would not have enough time to save anyone.

"Alright." Skinorse did not raise an objection to this. He was eager to leave the place as soon as possible.

...

As Link returned to Full Moon City, Eliard was being transported to Evelina towards the south.

Evelina was not traveling fast. Along the way, she carefully cleared away her tracks in her wake.

An hour passed, and she had traveled 100 miles. At this point, Eliard was now able to

speak. He said, "Since you've initiated the second stage of the evil spirits' plan, what are you still being so careful for? Link won't be able to catch up to you so soon."

Evelina continued what she was doing. "And what if he gets all emotional? I hear that the two of you are quite good friends."

"He won't." Eliard shook his head. "I know him, he'll deal with what's going on in Full Moon City, and only then will he come to Grizzly Hills alone. He'll be sure to come fully prepared for you, and your death will follow shortly."

Not at all angered by his words, Evelina smiled. "You seem to believe in him a lot. While I may not have a chance in beating him in battle, Shadow Stalker Morpheus may be able to."

"Your plan sounds so simple. I'm sure whatever you can think of, Link will be able to see it coming. As for Morpheus, he may be powerful, but everyone knows his secret. He still hasn't completely mastered his Level-19 power."

Evelina was still smiling at him. "Say what you will, we won't know for sure who will come out victorious until we actually battle it out."

Eliard could not find the words for a retort. Though he was confident in Link's abilities, his opponent was also a Legendary master who had allied herself with another even more powerful master. The odds were clearly stacked against Link.

He then fell silent.

Evelina continued heading south. She did not cast any Levitating spells but instead, simply walked along a winding trail, which saw few travelers.

After walking for an hour, the two of them reached a wide river valley in the mountains. The sky had darkened considerably. Evelina had stopped. She found a cave gaping from the stone wall on the riverside. She then entered it, bringing Eliard along with her.

"With your power, do you even need to rest here? Can't you just walk all the way to Grizzly Hills?" Eliard was confused.

Evelina said smilingly, "I'm saving up my energy for Link. He probably thinks I'm going all the way south without stopping. I'd like to see how he tries to stop me."

Eliard was speechless. The woman was being excessively cautious. However, unlike her, Eliard knew Link. If he were in the woman's shoes right now, he would probably exercise the same amount of caution as well.

Once inside the cave, Evelina pushed Eliard into the stone wall. The stone behind Eliard turned into putty. When Eliard had sunk into it, the stone hardened around him once more, forming a stone prison around his body. Only his head remained hanging out from the stone wall.

"Alright now, don't try anything funny." Evelina gently patted on Eliard's face and then chuckled. "Little one, your skin's still as smooth as a maiden's."

Eliard remained silent. He watched as the woman spread out a fur bedding in the cave, ready to spend the night here. He then said, "May I ask you something?"

"Ask away. I'm bored anyway." Evelina had laid down on the bedding and put her cape over her body like a blanket.

The cave was dark. Eliard did not possess night vision and so could not clearly see the woman's face. All he could see was a curvaceous silhouette in the darkness and the outline of her pointed ears. However, he was not at all curious about what she looked like. He asked, "I was wondering, as a High Elf Legendary master, why are you helping the Syndicate?"

Evelina laughed. "High Elf? No, only half of the blood flowing in my body is of High Elf origin. I'm like you, a half-elf. Do you really think my life on the Isle of Dawn was a happy one?"

Eliard was stunned. Due to his own High Elf ancestry, he understood what it was like for half-elves like him to live on the Isle of Dawn and be subjected to constant discrimination and disdain from the other High Elves. He was able to understand the woman's motivations. Why continue staying on such a tiny island and endure the contempt of its inhabitants when a master such as herself would be celebrated anywhere else for her talents?

"Then why choose the Syndicate?" Eliard asked again. He felt that there was no way to compare Ferde and the Syndicate; they were polar opposites of each other. What good could there be in siding with a shadowy group like the Syndicate?

"You ask too many questions." Evelina laughed and continued, "Though I suppose it's

okay to speak about this to you. There are two reasons why I'm doing this. The first one is that Morpheus had given something good. Naturally, one good deed deserves another, don't you think?"

"I guess. So what's the second reason?"

"The second? The second reason is that Link has made way too many enemies. He's still not strong enough, and it's only a matter of time before he gets himself killed. If I were to go to Ferde, won't I be embroiled in his troubles as well?" Evelina chuckled.

Saying this, she turned towards Eliard. "Truth be told, seeing that you're a half-elf yourself, if you choose to abandon your allegiance to Ferde, I'll spare your life. If I manage to defeat Link, I may even let you go free."

Eliard shook his head. "That's out of the question. Link is my friend. I've known him for a long time and have been through many things by his side. I will not betray him."

"Hmm, and what if he betrays you?" Evelina asked.

Hearing this, Eliard laughed out loud and said, "That won't happen."

"If you say so. It's still too early to be sure of anything. We'll just have to wait and see."

Eliard added, "I'm aware that Ferde has many enemies. Followers of the God of Destruction, the Syndicate, they're both enemies of Ferde on the surface. On the other hand, the High Elves pose a threat to Link from the shadows, but if you knew just how powerful Ferde really is, you'd be in for a surprise yourself."

Evelina was now more inclined to continue the conversation. "Well, at least you aren't completely clueless about the state of Ferde. But don't get too cocky. You need to understand just how powerful the High Elves are."

"How powerful are they?" Eliard was curious about this himself. It was a question he had been meaning to find an answer to. But the Isle of Dawn was too isolated from the outside world, and so the answer had eluded Eliard for a long time.

Evelina raised three fingers. "Three things to keep in mind. Firstly, the High Elves have a huge number of Magicians. As of right now, there are 80,000 Magicians above Level-6 among the High Elves."

"What? That many?" Eliard was taken aback upon hearing this.

"Of course. Most of these Magicians are below Level-10, but with the increase of Mana concentration around the world, there are now 5 Level-10 masters from the Isle of Dawn, myself included. Soon, this number will increase."

Eliard sucked in his breath. "And the other two points?"

"The other two... I won't tell you."

"Why?"

Evelina explained, "I simply left the Isle of Dawn, doesn't mean I intend to betray it. Why would I tell you the island's layout? Unless..."

"Unless what?" Eliard asked hastily.

"Unless you promise that you'll leave Ferde as well. There doesn't seem to be much hope left in that place, anyway."

Eliard shook his head. "Forget it then."

Despite saying this, Eliard was still trying to figure out how to extract such an important piece of information out of her. He needed to report this to Link.

Evelina yawned. "Fine, it's getting late. I'm going to sleep. I'll need to save up my strength and be prepared for anything."

Silence fell upon the cave. Only the sound of wind and flowing water could be heard from outside.

After spending two hours in silence, Eliard's ears suddenly pricked up to a muffled commotion outside the cave. Has Link caught up to them? thought Eliard hopefully.

Evelina had sat up. She strained her ears to listen to the sound outside. A few seconds later, she said with an irritated voice, "Oh, these people just won't leave me alone. I already told them I wouldn't be going back, and still, they keep pestering me."

# Chapter 531

## Demi-Elves Are Lost Souls

Night, river valley

"Stay here. Don't talk or move and I'll go check the situation," Evelina murmured.

"I can't move even if I wanted to like this." Eliard sighed.

Evelina realized he was right and left the cave without speaking further.

The sky outside the cave was starry. It was warm in the South. Frogs in the valley croaked, and some nocturnal birds sang occasionally. It was very lively.

She used a spell and levitated. Soon, she reached the top of a stone wall on the side of the river valley. There was a narrow platform there. She chose a place to stand and waited quietly.

Around half a minute later, three shadows arrived soundlessly. They stood in three different directions. Their features were obstructed in the darkness, but they had sharp ears. Their eyes also glowed with eerie silver light. These were the most obvious characteristics of High Elves.

Furthermore, the silver eyes were a symbol of pure High Elves. A mix like Evelina wouldn't have something like that.

Evelina recognized these three, and she was a bit surprised. The Isle of Dawn was for real this time. However, she pretended that she didn't know anything.

Impatiently, she said, "Eloven, Sonya, Milose, it's you three this time? Is the Elder Council planning on forcefully bringing me back? Don't forget that I'm a princess. My mother is the queen's sister!"

The three elves were the best of the Isle of Dawn's younger generation. Eloven, the eldest, was only 50 years old. This was equivalent to 30 years in human age. It was the prime of their life.



They could only quickly raise their power according to the changes in the world's Mana during this time. The elders couldn't do it because their vitality had decreased. Their powers were already set.

This situation was similar for the other races. Evelina was like this, and so were the three. They were all part of the new generation of High Elves about to enter the Legendary level.

On the other side, a tall High Elf walked forward. It was Eloven. "Evelina," he said coldly. "It is because of your status that Her Majesty tolerated you time and time again. However, there is a limit to her tolerance. Now, I will ask you one more time. Will you return to the Isle of Dawn with us?"

Evelina had a bad feeling and furrowed her brows. "What if I agree? And what if I don't?"

Sonya, the woman in the middle, walked forward. She looked average, but her talent was above average. "If you agree, nothing will happen. If you don't... we can only apologize first."

As she spoke, she stared at Evelina's practically perfect face. She hated that face because it wasn't hers.

"Apologize?" Sensing danger, Evelina grasped her wand and went into full alert. "You're ready to attack me just because I don't want to go back?"

The elf with the least sense of existence walked up. He was Milose. "I'm sorry, Your Highness. This isn't what we want. This was the decision of the Elder Council. Your mother knows about this. She agreed too."

Evelina winced at this. "My mother... she actually agreed?"

Her blood ran cold. Her mother could have abstained from voting, but she actually agreed. Even the one closest to her had chosen to abandon her? Was she just a lost soul now?

Evelina didn't know what she was feeling now. She wanted to cry, but she knew that the three High Elves would just mock her if she did.

Elovan sighed. "Your Highness," he said, voice a bit gentler. "You should know the

tradition of our race. We never impulsively participate in the matters of the mainland. You are from the royal family and joined the Syndicate. Their reputation is horrible. Your actions will damage our race's reputation."

Evelina hadn't wanted things to become so out of control. Softening her stance, she said, "Then what if I give up my status as a princess?"

"We cannot decide," Milose said. "Our mission is to bring you back to the Isle of Dawn. As for anything else, you can explain to the Elder Council."

"It's not open to discussion?" Evelina didn't want to give up. She knew what would happen if she returned. She'd escaped this time. If she went back, she probably would never be able to leave again. That wasn't the life that she wanted.

She wanted to explore the mainland and learn about new worlds. She wanted to be respected, not mocked behind her back.

The Isle of Dawn couldn't give her any of this.

Milose shook his head while Elován said, "Come back, Your Highness. The Isle of Dawn is where our race should be."

"But I don't want to go." Evelina pursed her lips tightly, unwilling to give in.

Sonya's face was expressionless. "Your Highness, stop being stubborn," she scolded. "Don't force us to act."

Evelina fell silent. She stood between the three without moving. Wind rushed past her, blowing her flowing dark red hair. It looked like flames.

The three High Elves were silent as well. They went into defensive poses, ready to react to this so-called princess' sudden attack.

This stalemate went on for three minutes. Finally, Evelina slumped and sighed. "Fine, I'll go with you all."

The three High Elves relaxed. Elován exhaled deeply. "That's the right choice, Your Hi—"

Before he could finish, Evelina suddenly moved. She pointed her wand at Elován, the

strongest of the three—Natural Flames!

Natural Flames

Level-10 Talent Spell

Casting Speed: Instant

Effect: Using the power of nature as fuel and the power of dragons as fire, ignite an extremely powerful and bright pillar of fire.

(Note: Evelina's talent.)

This spell was Evelina's strongest attack. It wasn't the most powerful, but it was the most suitable for battle. Paired with the instantaneous might, the opponent could be hit if they weren't careful enough.

This attack was too sudden, and Elován wasn't prepared at all. He only had time to activate his defense ring before he was pushed down the cliff by the red and green pillar of fire.

This heavily wounded him even though Evelina had held back some power. Otherwise, she could have killed Elován with that.

"So cruel!" Sonya screamed.

"I'm not going to play nice," Milose uttered.

The two attacked at once. Two black vines with a golden shine broke through the boulders of the mountain. They transformed into poisonous thorns that flew towards Evelina.

She'd just used the Natural Flames, so she was a bit delayed. Faced with these two fatal attacks, she could only defend herself.

Red and green light flashed on her, and a crystal shield spread across her body. Fire burned outside the shield. The black vines arrived the moment the shield was completed.

Boom, boom, crack. Under the continuous attacks from the vines, the shield shattered.

After that, the vines retracted, preparing to spring towards Evelina again.

"Go away!"

At this critical moment, Evelina cast a range defense spell. This type of spell was very effective in a battle with regular people. But against the strong, it could only lower the density of power and was rarely used. There was no perfect spell in the world. There was only one that was most suitable.

This type of spell could be incredibly effective at the right time.

Natural Dragon Power surged in Evelina's body, transforming into the illusion of a dragon. It roared, soundwaves spreading throughout the air. When the soundwaves hit Sonya and Milose, they shook violently. Their attacks paused.

It was only for one-hundredth of a second, but to Evelina, this was the chance to turn the tides.

She slightly adjusted her body and sent another Natural Flames attack towards Sonya.

Boom! Sonya was also thrown back from the attack, but she'd added a defense spell that was powerful enough. When this attack hit her, flames shot in all directions and the air screamed. However, there was an emerald barrier on her.

Once the barrier was consumed, the flames' power was used up too. In the end, Sonya was only lightly wounded. Before she was thrown back, she was still controlling her black vine and pierced Evelina.

Milose didn't hold back either. He was affected by the soundwaves, and his mind paused, but his attack continued. The dark vine pierced Evelina's chest.

There were two reasons why he didn't hold back.

First, this was between Legendary fighters. Evelina was publicly recognized as a rising star, and he didn't dare to hold back. Second, even though Evelina was a princess, she was only a half-elf. Since she had traitorous thoughts, she deserved to die!

Poof, poof. Evelina was stabbed through by the vines, but she'd dodged at the last moment. The vines missed her critical organs; she didn't die.

Dragon Power gave her a powerful body. Though she was heavily wounded, her mind was still clear. Power surged, and she cast her specialized Natural Flames. Milose, who'd thought that everything was set, was thrown into the air.

Without hesitating, she gritted her teeth and grasped the vines in her. Applying force, she yanked them out. The vines had barbs and high resistance to spells. Regular spells were completely ineffective against them. Only someone with Natural Power could control these vines.

Evelina could only use her hands. Blood streamed down her hands. When she yanked the vines out, the barbs came away with a lot of flesh.

"Ah!" She involuntarily screamed in pain. However, she didn't slow down at all. The vines were extremely poisonous. She immediately gulped down Elf Nectar and jumped down the cliff without hesitation. When she reached the cave, she grabbed Eliard and used all her might to flee.

She was heavily wounded in her stomach and the left side of her chest. She desperately needed treatment, but she had to run as far as possible. Elován was heavily injured, but Sonya and Milose only had light wounds. They would catch up quickly.

If they caught up again, it would be a fight to the death.

# Chapter 532

## She's an Incredible Woman

It was nighttime, and the dark sky was dotted with stars.

The wind howled past as Evelina soared through the night sky with Eliard in tow.

She had sealed up the two wounds on her body with her ice spells in order to stop the bleeding. But her internal injuries were severe, and the vines that had struck her were poisonous. Their poisonous thorns remained still within her body.

She had taken some Elf Nectar, a High Elf medicinal specialty, but the antidote only prevented the poison from entering areas of her body that were not yet damaged by it. Its effect would not reach parts of her body that were already touched by the poison. As a result, it would not be able to neutralize the poison itself. The vines' poison and thorns were effectively disrupting her body's ability to heal.

At that moment, her Natural Dragon Power swirled rapidly within her body. Due to her injuries, she was forced to endure incredible pain every second.

She was holding Eliard in one hand. At first, Eliard did not know what was going on. After a few minutes, he suddenly felt a sudden chill on the back of her neck. He reached around to touch it and realized that it was water.

Where did it come from? He turned around strangely. With the magical light swirling around them, he was able to make out Evelina's form.

Her face was pale. Beads of cold sweat seeped out from her forehead. What startled him most was her chest area, where two large holes had been torn on her clothes. The fabric around the two holes was drenched in her blood.

Shocked by this, Eliard shouted, "Hey, how did you get those wounds? Aren't they supposed to be your comrades?"

He had heard a commotion outside and figured that they had started fighting. Judging from her movements before, he had assumed that she was still alright. He did not

expect that she would be so severely injured.

Evelina squeezed out a bitter smile. "Before, yes. Now, not so much. They're coming to kill me soon."

Finishing her sentence, she let out an uncontrollable cough. Eliard could smell the thick, metallic odor of blood. He also saw traces of blood on the corner of her mouth.

Eliard was stunned speechless.

He had been listening to Vance's stories about the High Elves for a period of time and noticed a trend in them. The High Elves placed great emphasis on their traditions and customs that were passed down for thousands of years. They tended to straighten out those who did not abide by them.

For instance, any half-elves conceived from a union between a High Elf and a non-High Elf would be exiled from the Isle of Dawn. Other examples of their conservatism include the fact that the High Elves would do anything at all costs to eliminate any variables that could upset the strategic balance they had worked hard to maintain on the continent, like Link himself. They also did not tolerate traitors and rebels in their midst.

Their adherence to traditions bordered on extremism. If they could not rectify an irregularity through normal means, they would most certainly resort to violent measures without any mercy.

It would seem that Evelina had no way of reconciling with the Isle of Dawn.

"How many are there behind us?" Eliard asked. He sensed that things had gone awry for them. Ferde and the Isle of Dawn had not been on good terms recently. There had been a few clashes in the magical equipment business between both sides. Eliard figured that if those High Elves caught up to them, they would most probably not survive the encounter.

"There are three of them." Evelina turned around a few times to look behind her. She could now sense her pursuers' auras. They were gaining on them, including Elovan.

Even though he was hurt badly, Elovan was a Legendary master as well. With the medicine he had in hand and the aid of his companions, Elovan would soon be able to restore his combat capability.

Eliard shivered and said, "To be able to beat you up like that... are all three of them Level-10 masters?"

"Bingo."

"Do you think you'll be able to ditch them?" Eliard drew in the cold air.

"I don't know, guess we'll have to find out..." Before she could finish, Evelina's body suddenly lost its balance. She wobbled a few times in the air before finally regaining her balance. She almost crashed into a tree in front of them.

Petrified by their close shave with death, he quickly asked, "You're badly wounded. Can you still go on?"

"Even if I can't, I still need to keep on flying. If they catch up to us, we're dead," said Evelina through gritted teeth.

Eliard was able to sense the approaching powerful auras behind him at this point. Panicking, he said, "You don't seem sure that you'll be able to shake them off. Why don't you find someplace to hide? I may be able to help you with that."

"You?" Evelina looked sideways at Eliard. "You can't even escape me before, how do you expect to help me escape now?"

"That was different." Eliard quickly tried to explain himself. "I did not expect to be confronted by a master like yourself. I was caught unprepared. If I had made preparations beforehand, you would not have found me back then."

"What do you have in mind then?" Evelina was now starting to believe him.

Eliard's forehead was now sweating profusely. He turned around and saw that three small green points had appeared behind him and were steadily getting bigger.

"Link had given me a runestone. Release me from your restraints. With this runestone, we'll be able to escape the High Elves."

Evelina was silent for a few seconds. She then released him. "You go then. I don't want to get you killed."

Eliard was stunned for a moment. "You're not coming with me?"



Evelina laughed and looked at him. "You really are greedy. Saving your own life should be more than enough, now you want to bring me along with you? Besides, we're still enemies. This is a perfect chance for you to flee now."

Saying this, she let out another uncontrollable cough and a spurt of blood from her mouth. Eliard was shocked by such a sight, but he knew that Evelina was right. He was already released by his captive, and there was no need for him to bring her along with him.

However, Eliard was not comfortable with abandoning her here to meet her fate.

Under the current circumstances, he did not have enough time to think things through. He took out the runestone, embraced Evelina and let his power flow into the runestone.

Hum... There was a soft white light around them. The two of them instantly vanished. A few seconds later, they had reappeared a few thousand feet from where they were before, in the middle of a tropical jungle.

The moment they reappeared, a faint red light shone out from the runestone. It flashed out, covering the trees and rocks around them with a layer of magical runes. The runes flickered for a moment and then vanished.

Soon after, Evelina felt that the energy ripples around her had finally subsided, as if nothing had happened there.

"What is that?" asked Evelina, surprised.

The runestone had teleported them across a few thousand feet and smoothened out all energy ripples at the same time. It had also formed a perfect invisibility barrier around them. The runestone was the ideal magical artifact for narrow escapes.

Eliard was a bit pleased with himself. "It's a defensive runestone that Link had given me. I'll bet those three won't be able to find this place."

Evelina was still incredulous about this. She walked around the rune barrier, carefully feeling it. Astonishment gradually came over her face until finally, she let out a sigh.

"I'd heard from the High Elf elders that Link was an absolute magical genius. I wasn't convinced back then, but it's clear from this that his magical achievements are equal

to none. My abilities can't even compare to his. Those three will surely not be able to find us here."

The rune barrier gave off large amounts of Law Magic, which included the enigmatic Time Power. She had seen the whole thing and was only able to understand half of it. It might take her a few years to fully comprehend the whole rune barrier.

Evelina figured that not even Bryant or the three upstarts pursuing them would be able to decipher the barrier. In other words, both Evelina and Eliard were safe in it for now.

She slackened her shoulders in relief. As a result of this, waves of pain washed over her from her injuries. Her vision blurred, and the world spun around her.

Before she hit the ground, she saw Eliard running towards her. She felt a sudden relief. Even though they were enemies, she did not feel the least bit worried at the sight of him. For some reason, she believed that Eliard would not harm her.

True enough, before she fell, Eliard managed to catch her in time.

"What's wrong... hey, what did you do?" The concern in Eliard's voice suddenly turned into a mix of confusion and anger.

What he received from her was not a response, but a sudden rush of power from Evelina, which once again sealed up his own power.

"Hehe." Evelina chuckled evilly in Eliard's embrace. "Little one, here's a lesson for you. Never feel sorry for your enemies. Now help me over to that tree. Don't try to think your way out of this, or I'll show you what I'm really capable of!"

Eliard was taken aback. "You still haven't given up on your mission?"

"Of course not. I already promised Morpheus that I would bring you to the South. There's no going back now. I simply saw the opportunity, and I took it. Also, I still haven't received my reward."

When Evelina reached the tree, she lied back against it. Not at all bothered by Eliard's presence beside her, she pulled off her clothes and revealed her snow-white skin. She then began treating the wounds on her chest.

Eliard blushed and turned away immediately from her.

"Hey, don't just stand there. Give me a hand here. There are still a lot of poisonous thorns inside my wounds. I need your help extracting them out."

Eliard now harbored no good will towards her after what she did to him. He replied coldly, "Aren't you supposed to be the better Magician? You deal with it yourself."

"Come and help me, quick. Or I'll really die, and I don't intend to die alone here," said Evelina.

Eliard had no choice. He turned around and made a conscious effort not to look at her pristine white body. He then stammered out, "What should I do?"

"Use your hands. Clean them first, then reach into my wounds and pull the thorns out."

Eliard lowered his eyes to look at her wounds and was shocked to find two bloody holes, each as big as a fist. He was momentarily shocked. "Are you out of your mind? You'll die for sure if I do what you asked. Can't I just use the Magician's Hand?"

"Won't work. These thorns are immune to spells below Level-10. Quick, I won't be able to hold out much longer."

Eliard was left with no other choice and did as he was told.

When he reached into her wound, Evelina let out a pained moan. She pulled out a root nearby and bit on it hard. Sweat now flowed down her forehead like a waterfall. Her body was also slightly trembling from the pain.

Eliard was also trembling. This was just too much for him. He had never done anything like this.

"Stop dawdling and hurry up! I can't take any of this much longer," urged Evelina.

Eliard quickly tried to calm his nerves and began pulling out the thorns one by one. Each thorn was at least five inches long. There were barbs on each of them, which drew even more blood and torn flesh out of her wound every time he pulled a thorn out. The sight was horrifying.

He looked at Evelina and saw that she had been biting hard on the root throughout the

process. Her eyes had glazed over.

At this point, he did not know what to feel. His hatred towards her had faded somewhat and was now replaced by respect and admiration for her tenacity.

She's truly a remarkable woman. If only she had sided with Ferde and not the Syndicate... Eliard sighed and resumed pulling out the thorns.

After much effort, Eliard managed to finally pull out the thorns from Evelina's body.

"You alright?" he asked.

There was no response. Eliard looked at her and saw that Evelina had lost consciousness. Startled, he tried to feel for her breathing from her nose. It was faint. He then pressed his ear against her chest to listen for her heartbeat. It was faint as well. She had probably fainted from the extreme pain.

Eliard heaved a sigh. He did not know what to do at this point. His power was sealed off by Evelina, which rendered his spatial gear unusable. He had at first thought about using the communication rune in it to contact Link, but now he could not even take it out from his spatial gear.

As he thought about this for a while, he pulled Evelina's shirt back up. He had heard that patients who had sustained severe injuries and lost a lot of blood were especially susceptible to the cold. He then took off his robe to cover her body.

He then waited.

Before long, midnight came. Exhausted, Eliard laid against a tree and was just about to doze off when all of a sudden, he was woken up by a peculiar sound.

He strained his ears. In an instant, fear gripped him. It was the High Elves. They had managed to track them all the way here without the aid of any spells.

# Chapter 533

## A True Strong Figure

Because he had the Seed of Sunlight, Eliard was much stronger than before. His five senses were much more sensitive too.

For example, he heard some abnormal noises now. In reality, the High Elves should be more than 3000 feet away and hadn't discovered them yet.

Eliard had many choices now. The safest one was to abandon the woman who'd kidnapped him and escape alone. The High Elves would leave after finding this woman. But after thinking, he didn't choose that.

She was only working with Morpheus. If I find the right method, I can make her turn around and join Ferde. At that time, we'll become even stronger.

Eliard found a high and mighty excuse for himself. Now that he had a goal, he had to think about what to do next.

All his power was sealed; he couldn't use anything. The only thing he had was a body stronger than the average man. With the Sunlight Power, his body was like a Level-6 Warrior.

Of course, there was just his strength. He didn't have any of the skills.

He couldn't stay here anymore. The High Elves were getting closer; they would soon find this place. He had to take this half-elf and leave.

He went to work as soon as he got this idea. Bending down, Eliard carefully picked up the unconscious Evelina. While doing so, he carefully checked her wounds. After he was sure she'd stopped bleeding, he carried her and ran away from the pursuers.

After a while, Eliard felt that he couldn't just run like this. They were deep in the woods, and he'd left many marks. The two also left behind their auras. The High Elves would definitely use it to trace them.

Eliard thought of an idea. I must find a river and go downstream. That can keep us from getting discovered.

Finding a river in the forest was a survival ability for regular people. For a Magician like Eliard, it was easy. He only had to follow the water element in the air to pinpoint the location of the river.

He stood quietly and felt around for a while. Then he started hurrying northwestward.

He walked carefully. After walking through the fallen leaves, he would cover his footprints with leaves. Every few hundred feet, he would stop to listen and distinguish where the others were. He would only continue after he was sure of their safety.

After traveling a few thousand feet like this, Evelina's breathing grew heavier in his arms. Some more seconds later, she opened her eyes.

She didn't say anything. After looking around and understanding what had happened, she asked, "They're chasing us?"

Eliard was happy. He nodded and said, "They're not far, just a few miles away. I need my power freed right now. Unlock it for me."

Evelina seemed not to hear him. "Since we were discovered, why did you bring me with you instead of running by yourself?"

"Stop, we can talk when we're safe. Hurry, they're going to catch up," Eliard urged.

But Evelina kept saying, "Are you afraid that you'll die after I die, so you want to trick me into unlocking your power? And then you'll escape alone?"

"If I wanted to escape, I'd have done it long ago. I wouldn't wait until now."

This reasoning made sense and Evelina believed it. "Alright, seeing as you brought me with you, I'll trust you."

She unlocked Eliard's power once again.

Eliard felt the frozen power inside him suddenly start flowing again. He exhaled deeply and immediately pulled a special potion from his spatial pendant. Uncapping it, he put it to Evelina's mouth. "Drink. It's really effective."

The potion was crystal-red and glimmered in the night. Evelina hesitated but still opened her mouth.

Eliard was still angry at this half-elf, so he poured the entire bottle down her throat. Evelina gulped it down and choked. "Can't you slow down?!" she exclaimed.

"Hmph. This is what I got to save my life. Be grateful that I'm letting you drink it. Did you want me to spoon feed you?" Eliard made a face.

He put away the bottle and stopped looking for the river. He turned northward.

After a few steps, Evelina felt something wrong. "Why are you going north?"

"To go back to Ferde," Eliard replied nonchalantly. With that, his hand moved to grasp Evelina's wrist. Grinning, he said, "I won't fall for the same trick twice. Don't think about locking my power again."

With that, Eliard let go of Evelina's hand and cackled. "I suggest that you don't try any more tricks. That potion you just drank isn't that simple. Link made it. It looks like a healing potion, but it's actually poison. You're poisoned now, and only Link has the antidote, hehe."

"Really?" Evelina didn't believe him. She felt warm now, and her wounds didn't hurt anymore. How could it be poison?

Eliard shrugged. "Why else would I force it down your throat?"

With that, Evelina was close to believing it. If a regular potionist made this potion, she wouldn't believe it. But it had to be made by Link, whom she feared greatly. It really might contain some fatal thing.

Now, she didn't dare try anything. Glaring at Eliard, she said, "You're so despicable!"

"I learned it from you, haha," Eliard said, grinning.

He continued walking north. Soon, he climbed past a tall mountain. Reaching the foot of the mountain, he took out a runestone that had the same crystal-red glow. He added power into the stone, and it glowed a bit brighter.

"What are you doing now?" Evelina asked despite guessing what he was planning.

Eliard didn't keep it from her. "I'm contacting Link. The mountain is behind us so the High Elves shouldn't be able to sense it. Link will hurry over after I send the signal."

He maintained the runestone for three seconds. Then he put it away and continued northward.

In order to keep hidden from the High Elves, he walked slowly and carefully. Starting and stopping, he only walked around 1500 feet after five minutes.

As they walked, Evelina suddenly said, "Oh no, they're coming towards us... They must have discovered your traces."

Eliard was surprised, but he didn't panic. He took out a runestone again and looked around. Finding a big tree, he cast a Levitation spell and floated to the top. He activated the rune, and half a second later, watery ripples appeared in the space surrounding them. It stayed this way for three seconds before everything went back to normal.

"And what was that for?" Evelina couldn't help but ask. The runestone was also crystal-red. She supposed that it was from Link too.

"To fold space," Eliard explained. "Now, we can see under the tree, but they can't see us... Or more accurately, they can see but won't notice us. We're smaller than sesame seeds to them now."

While speaking, he found a comfortable place to sit and started waiting patiently.

After around five minutes, three figures appeared beneath the tree. They were High Elves Elován, Sonya, and Milose. The three circled the place many times and finally stopped.

Eliard and Evelina could hear their voices.

"Strange. They disappeared."

"I can feel that they're here. They must've used some invisibility spell. Keep looking."

The three started circling again and used many detection spells. They still didn't find anything. Finally, they regrouped under the tree.



"Nope. They vanished."

"Maybe they're hiding in another realm?"

"It's possible. Let's go look."

The three disappeared on the spot. Clearly, they went to another realm.

Evelina was entirely shocked at this. Only by being in it could she feel just how powerful the runestone was. They were less than 100 feet away, but the High Elves couldn't sense them at all. And it was just a runestone. If Link himself was here, the three could search their entire lives without finding anything.

Eliard looked down too. He wasn't as relaxed. The others were only fooled temporarily and would realize at some point. At that time, they would be dead.

The seconds ticked by. After another ten minutes, the three High Elves returned. They weren't stupid and had an idea of how Eliard was hiding now.

"They must've used a spatial spell. Let's look more carefully."

The three split up again and regrouped five minutes later. Then they looked up towards the big tree.

"There's something wrong with the tree."

"There's something wrong with the sky too. It's kind of red."

"It's morning. That's the sunrise... No, there's something wrong. It's too red."

In the tree, Eliard's heart pounded and almost leaped from his throat, but now, Link was finally here. He let out a long sigh and said to Evelina, "It's alright now. Link's here. We're safe."

Evelina didn't say anything. She looked up and saw that the sky was fiery red now. Pressure covered the sky and kept coming in waves. She couldn't breathe.

Link wasn't here yet, but the sky had already changed.

Evelina trembled inwardly and thought, We're both in the Legendary level. How come

he's so powerful?

# Chapter 534

## Is He Trying to Kill Himself?

The sky was a fiery red. In the midst of the inferno, a red silhouette landed with a bang like a meteorite.

When the silhouette approached, a white light flashed across it. All sound died off, and a man materialized beneath a tree out of thin air.

The man's black eyes gleamed beneath his black hair. He was wearing a dark blue battle robe with silver linings. A red magic sword with dragon scales dangled from his waist. His body was shrouded by a mist, which gradually thickened around him until he was completely obscured by it.

From the mist, a deadpan voice rang out, "Quite a party you have here."

Dread came across the three High Elf Magicians' faces. They were aware of Link's feats. Half a year ago, he had dueled with Bryant, one of the most powerful Magicians among the High Elves. Since then, Bryant was reluctant to share the outcome of their duel with anyone. It was clear that he had lost badly to Link.

Half a year had passed, and young Legendary talents had emerged from the Isle of Dawn ever since. However, none of them had forgotten that the Lord of Ferde was a lot younger than any of them when he reached Legendary and possessed an innate potential to develop himself even further.

There was no telling how much more Link, who was first to reach Legendary in Firuman, would still be able to grow. It was simply unthinkable.

Right now, his mere presence had managed to unnerve the three High Elves.

Despite not knowing why he had come, they were not so foolish as to dispense with formalities, especially when they were dealing with Link himself. Elovan stepped forth and bowed down before him. "My lord, it is an honor to meet you."

Without a word, Link eyed his surroundings and noticed a heavily injured Evelina on

the top of a tree near him. She was leaning against Eliard, whose hand gingerly held her body. He had not anticipated such a development.

Eliard had buried himself in his magical studies and was generally unmoved by the female gender ever since his last breakup. Link had never seen him so concerned over another woman's well-being.

From the looks of things, he must be infatuated with this woman, who seemed to reciprocate his feelings as well. In that case, Link saw no reason not to help them out here.

After thinking for a while, he said to the High Elves, "I've come to apprehend a fugitive of Ferde. She's a half-elf called Evelina. Have you seen her?"

The three High Elves looked at each other for a moment. Elovan then asked carefully, "I don't suppose you would care to share with us what crimes Evelina has committed?"

Link gravely replied, "She was found guilty of conspiring against the Southmoon Kingdom. Her actions have basically turned the kingdom upside down. She has even abducted my best friend, Eliard. Don't you think she should be tried for such crimes?"

"Well..." Elovan was left speechless.

Just then, Sonya walked up and said, "My lord, I won't try to hide the facts. We're also trying to bring Evelina to justice, but we did not realize that she had committed such offenses. Though she is a princess of the High Elves, she has shamelessly joined the Syndicate. The Isle of Dawn does not tolerate traitors like her. Rest assured, she'll be executed on the spot once we find her. We will most certainly not cause you any trouble."

"Straight execution, you say?" Link was stunned. He did not realize that Evelina was in such a tight spot. She had basically turned her back on the Isle of Dawn. He had never encountered such a scenario in the game.

On the tree, Evelina had gone pale.

Eliard too was shocked by this. He then immediately came to his senses and smiled coldly at her. "Ha, so your name's Evelina. Nice name, not too bright though. See, this is the Isle of Dawn you're trying to protect. These people are intent on killing you."

He was not worried about being heard by the High Elves beneath the tree. The Folded Dimension was soundproof. Though he could hear everything outside the Folded Dimension, no one else could hear him.

Beneath the tree

Link was the only one who was aware of everything around him. He glanced up at the two on top of the tree and noticed Evelina's dejected expression. For a moment, he had the same thought as Eliard: it would be a great boon to him if she were to join forces with Ferde.

And so, he waved a hand at the three High Elves and said, "No need to concern yourselves, I'll handle this myself. I've already found her anyway. She's hiding on top of that tree, so why don't you just go back home and let me take care of this?"

Elovan immediately caught on to what Link had in mind. If Evelina was any other Magician, they would be fine letting Link take her in. But she had mastered a wide array of Legendary spells native to the Isle of Dawn. If Ferde took in someone like her, the Dawn of Isle's magical knowledge would be revealed to the outside world.

He looked up at the top of the tree. As a Folded Dimension was cast on it, he could vaguely sense the presence of someone in it. He had no way of knowing who was in the Folded Dimension, though.

Left with no other option, he spoke, "My lord, I would not dare hide this from you, so I'll just say it right now. Evelina has betrayed the High Elf race, and the elders on our island have demanded that she be executed on the spot..."

Link slowly shook his head. "I think you misheard me. There's nothing else for you to do here. Whatever goes on in the Isle of Dawn has nothing to do with me. If you still wish to carry out an execution, you'll have to wait until I'm done interrogating her."

"You..." Elovan choked up in exasperation.

The three High Elves exchanged solemn looks with each other. This time, Milose stepped forward. His expression was one of humility and respect. "My lord, how about this? We take Evelina with us, while you take back Eliard, and the Isle of Dawn will compensate you for your losses. What do you think?"

Link fell silent. A few seconds later, he spoke, "I'm not in the habit of repeating myself

a third time. Go. Now."

There was no turning back at this point.

The three High Elves were in their youth. The oldest among them, Elovan, was no more than 50 years old. They were all brimming with youthful vigor. Seeing that their negotiations had hit a dead end, their faces darkened considerably.

The female High Elf took another step forward. "My lord, we respect you, but that doesn't mean you can do as you please. If still you insist on walking this path, I guess we have no choice but to settle this the old-fashioned way."

Saying this, she pulled out her magic wand. Though it seemed like an ordinary tree branch, unimaginable amounts of Nature Power flowed within it.

The other two High Elves had followed suit. Their wands resembled branches as well.

Though their wands did not look aesthetically pleasing, they were in fact carved out from the High Elves' World Tree, and they possessed unimaginable power. In the game world, these branches were the standard gear of every Legendary High Elf master.

Judging from the stances they had taken, it seemed that they were now ready for combat.

Link sighed. He placed a hand on the pommel of his Dragon King's Fury sword. His voice had grown cold. "You are among the finest the Dawn of Isle has to offer. It would be quite a waste to throw away your lives like that before my sword. How about this: I'll just stand here without moving, and I'll let you youngins hit me first with your best spells. If you're able to make me move an inch, that means I lose, and you get to take Evelina away. But if you can't even do that, you go back home. What do you think?"

If he were anyone else other than the Lord of Ferde, Link would not have given himself such a handicap. He would have struck first and killed all three of them with three quick stabs of his sword.

However, Ferde was not in a position to incur the Isle of Ferde's wrath at the moment. He could not just kill the youngest talents of the Isle of Dawn without any reason.

Even so, it was arrogant of Link to offer such a handicap. They were all Legendary masters, and Link stood all alone against the three High Elves. He was evidently

belittling them!

All three High Elves were now red with anger. They would not stand for such mockery!

Youngins? They've been studying magic for more than 30 years, and how long had Link only been a Magician? Only two years or so!

Evelina looked on wordlessly at this. She asked Eliard in a low voice, "He's not serious, is he? He's going to kill himself! Even Bryant would not dare pick a fight with all three at the same time!"

Eliard shrugged. "I don't know. But I know for a fact that Link would not do anything he was unsure of."

Below the tree, Elovan took a deep breath and calmed his nerves down. He knew that this was the only possible road out of their current dilemma. "My lord, isn't this a bit ridiculous?"

"I'm not one to joke about such a thing." Link gave him a faint smile.

"Alright, then allow us to give you a taste of the true power of the High Elves' Nature Magic!"

# Chapter 535

## Too Embarrassing

Forest

Link stood steadily on the ground. Blue haze wrapped around him, covering his body.

His Dragon Power limit had reached 17000 points. One point was equal to five Mana points for humans. This meant he had 85000 Mana points in total.

The magnitude of this was unbelievable. Only five people in all of Firuman had power of a larger scale than Link—the Red Dragon Queen, Bryant, Dark Magician Eugene, Light Magician Halino, and Shadow Walker Morpheus.

The three High Elves before him had only broken past Level-10. Their power wasn't even one-fourth of Link's. If converted to Dragon Power, they had 4000 points at most. They couldn't even be compared.

Regardless of power, Link's knowledge of magic was on a completely different scale too.

The High Elves lived on the Isle of Dawn, the home of magic. They'd practiced magic for more than 30 years too. From this, they should be masters, but this wasn't so.

Life on the Isle of Dawn was too peaceful. There was no pressure and obviously, no motivation either. The High Elves mostly studied due to their own interests.

It was different for Link though. He was putting in his all every second of the day.

Link had only studied magic for two years, but he'd received tips from various strong figures—the Red Dragon Queen, the exiled god, Bryant's Revelations Scroll, the God of Light's rewards, and more. He even learned martial arts and was at the point of starting his own school.

Right now, Link was skilled in every aspect. His abilities were immeasurable.



As for the magic equipment, it went without saying too. As the lord of Ferde, he was rich and didn't lack any materials. Combining the ones he'd made and received by chance, he had at least six Legendary pieces of equipment. The High Elves were geniuses of their race. Though they had more than enough equipment, they couldn't be compared to a territory's lord. If this was a physical distance, the High Elves probably had to use a telescope to see Link.

He had the absolute advantage in every aspect.

Even if Evelina came down from the tree and joined the battle, fighting four against one, Link still had no fear. He was confident in ending the battle within two seconds.

On the other hand, the three High Elves thought they could win this gamble too.

It was like a joke. Link would stand there without moving and let them attack. They also had the advantage of attacking first. And instead of defeating him, they only had to make him move his feet. If they couldn't even do that, they'd be humiliated.

"Lord, we will start now. Get ready," Elovan reminded before starting. He thought it was too easy for them this time. He had to be polite.

Link wanted to shake his head. These High Elves were too young and hadn't experienced the cruelty of the world. If he was in their place, he would find a chance for a surprise attack instead of saying this.

He just stood in place without using any defense spells. "Stop wasting time and do it."

As soon as he spoke, Elovan, Sonya, and Milose moved at once. They used the Black-Gold Thorn, their most powerful and handiest trick.

Boom, boom, boom. Three poisonous black vines, thick as one's fist and gleaming gold, broke through the ground. Like pythons, they came for Link from different directions.

The spell was similar to what they did to Evelina, but the force was different.

Against Evelina, they'd still held back, thus letting Evelina escape. But against Link, they didn't dare go easy on him. They used all their power at once.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. The three vines attacked together with extreme speed. The air cracked with wind and thunder. Poisonous thorns sprouted from the vines. The

vines waved at the same time, and the thorns swarmed towards Link like wasps.

The three vines and clouds of thorns blocked all of Link's escape routes.

Every thorn flashed with emerald light. This was the toxin. Once inside Link's body, he would be affected no matter how powerful he was unless he had the High Elves' antidote. Even if he didn't die, his combat abilities would be decimated.

Seeing this, Evelina clapped her hand over her mouth and cried softly, "It's over."

The Black-Gold Thorn was the High Elves' best trick. The seeds of the vines were from the Level-18 World Tree and nurtured by Natural magic. Their attributes were very special. Other than Natural magic, practically no other magic could equalize them. They were also extremely sturdy, with an excellent resistance to magic. To them, iron was as fragile as paper. Shields below Level-11 practically didn't exist before them.

Faced with an attack like this, even the most powerful Warrior would commit suicide. Magicians only had one solution: use a spell to escape.

But Link had said earlier that he wouldn't take even half a step. That meant he could only die.

Just as the thorns were about to reach him, Link's Dragon Power flared. The buzz shook everyone's hearts as the space around him suddenly expanded. It stretched like a rubber band until the entire space swelled.

To everyone else, it was as if Link's body suddenly became thousands of feet away.

Evolan, Sonya, and Milose stood in a triangle around Link, but they felt the same way. Eliard and Evelina also felt that way in the tree. They watched as their tree shot up like they were thousands of feet up in the air.

What they couldn't comprehend was that Link really didn't move. He was still in the same spot.

Here was the problem: they were suddenly so far away from Link. No matter how powerful the vines were, there was a range. One thousand feet was the limit, but now they were thousands of feet away. How could this work out?

What happened was that the vines of the Black-Gold Thorn spell slackened after

around 300 feet. The thorns were able to fly to the limit, but then they dropped helplessly too.

When all attacks ended, the space buzzed again and went back to normal. Link's body "snapped" back from thousands of feet away.

He really hadn't moved during this. He just stood there without doing anything.

The three High Elves lost.

The forest was deathly silent.

The High Elves gulped in unison. How could they compete with such a miraculous spatial technique? No matter how powerful they were, they couldn't hit Link. When they used up all their energy, he came back to harvest the fruits. This was hopeless.

After a while, Elován put away his wand first. Speechless, he bowed to Link and turned to leave. Sonya and Milose were also shocked. Sonya opened her mouth to speak but gave up. She left with Elován; Milose followed.

The three weren't powerful enough. They'd attacked first but couldn't even make Link budge. It was too embarrassing.

When the three were far away, Eliard brought Evelina down from the tree. "See, I said Link would win, but you didn't believe me," he said excitedly. "You're so ignorant."

Evelina couldn't refute it. She was still shocked, but now she had to worry about her own fate.

"Lord, how will you punish me?" All thought of fighting back disappeared after seeing Link's skills.

Link canceled the blue haze around him and looked coolly at Evelina. "You created 97 Ethereal Warriors in the Southmoon Kingdom and, either directly or non-directly, affected 12 people, including the dean of the Grinth Magic Academy and Amir, Magician of Ferde's ambassador group. These are all grave sins that must be punished."

Hearing this, Eliard opened his mouth to speak. However, he quickly realized that he had no reason to defend Evelina, so he kept quiet.

Evelina was much more resigned than Eliard. She shrugged as if she'd given up. "Then say what you're planning. I only have this life. Take it if you want."

"You must give something to the Southmoon Kingdom and me, as well. I must know the specific details about the Ethereals and the Syndicate in the South. I also need to know anything about Legendary High Elf magic. If you tell me, you can live. Of course, you'll still be imprisoned."

He wanted to have Evelina on their side, but the territory had laws. He couldn't let her go just because she was useful. There was nothing free in the world.

"Fine, I'm a captive now. I can't choose, so just ask whatever you want to know. I have a requirement though. If you don't agree, I'd rather die."

She was more like the Syndicate's mercenary. As for loyalty, she'd ended all thoughts for the Isle of Dawn after learning that her mother agreed with the Elder Council.

"Alright, what is it?" Link asked.

"I can be imprisoned, but I want Eliard to be my guard."

Eliard was speechless. He didn't know what this woman was thinking but... he was kind of happy.

Link stared hard at Evelina. Her eyes sparkled and wavered. After a while, Link had a guess as to what she wanted. Smiling thinly, he said, "I agree. You have to ask Eliard if he agrees though."

She obviously wanted to use Eliard's feelings for her to escape. Sadly, she underestimated Eliard. It wouldn't take long for her to fall into his trap.

"Eliard, do you agree?" Evelina turned to look at him.

"I... I'll listen to Link." Eliard was confused but still agreed.

# Chapter 536

## Profit beyond One's Imagination

The medicine that Eliard gave Evelina worked really well. A few hours after taking it, she had recovered much of her strength and was able to walk herself.

But her body was still weak. Lazy to walk on her own, she allowed Eliard to carry her all the way.

The three of them were headed north. Link had activated his Void Walk to hasten their journey. In half an hour, they managed to arrive outside Full Moon City.

Once they landed, the three of them then entered the city.

Evelina looked around. She noticed that everything was still in order. There did not seem to be any sign of chaos. She then gave Link a perplexed look as he walked on in front of them.

Link felt her gaze and chuckled. "The second stage of your plan was almost perfect. The only problem was that the Ethereal Warriors had been too slow to carry it out. When I got here, they still hadn't arrived in the city."

"What about the king?" asked Evelina. She had noticed that the wanted posters plastered around the city had been torn down. This meant that the king had been taken care of.

Link smiled and took out a pale yellow crystal. He tossed it up and down in his hand, then threw it to Eliard. "Catch. Let her have a look at it."

Evelina looked carefully at the crystal held up by Eliard in front of her eyes.

The crystal somewhat resembled a piece of amber, and a cotton-like substance swirled abundantly inside it. She held out her hand and touched it. It was smooth and warm to the touch, and it did not feel sharp or angular like other gemstones. At the same time, she sensed a familiar aura coming from it.

"This is..." She turned to Link, still uncertain.

"You guessed it. The Ethereals that you've brought in are now inside the crystal. In it, they can neither live nor die."

The Soul Crystal was a unique item. It could store souls in a way similar to pendrives back on earth. Any file stored in a pendrive would be preserved as it was, a dead thing removed from all external influences. The file would only be subject to change via user input once it was extracted from the pendrive and run on a computer.

The Soul Crystal was a pendrive of sorts, while the possessed victims were the computers infected by the Ethereals. Once they were stored within a Soul Crystal, the Ethereals remained a dead thing inside it.

These "dead things" possessed peculiar properties. Their sophisticated structures contained a large number of rune groupings. By infusing one's power into the crystal with the right technique, one could reactivate these rune groupings and draw out the Ethereal's power.

In other words, the Ethereal Crystal was a magical item with an immediate effect.

Evelina swallowed. She eyed Link incredulously and asked, "They are living beings capable of speech and thought, and you're storing them like mere objects. Aren't you afraid their guardians will have an issue with such abuse?"

Link laughed out loud. "I neither bought them like merchandise nor slaughtered them like mere sheep. They got what they deserved. Why shouldn't I have my way with them? It's not my fault their essences have such useful properties."

Eliard listened on to all this, confused. He asked, "Link, what are you two talking about? Evelina, who's capable of speech and thought? And what's this talk about guardians?"

Evelina looked at the crystal in Eliard's hand, still finding the whole thing difficult to accept. She then explained to Eliard, "Link stored the souls of the Ethereals inside this crystal, turning them into a piece of magical equipment."

Eliard was shocked upon hearing her explanation. If he had heard of this before, he would have leaped up in protest. However, right now, his mentality had undergone a major upheaval.

He observed the crystal carefully in his hand. He then asked Link, "How useful is this?"

Link replied, "Ethereals possess unique powers inside their souls. For instance, by imbuing your power into it with the right technique, the Ethereal Crystal that you're holding now will be able to produce Level-10 Earth Power."

Eliard's eyes brightened up. His mind was able to immediately grasp what Link was saying. He then said, "By that logic, does that mean any ordinary Magician will be able to summon out Legendary power with any magical equipment forged with this crystal as its base?"

Link nodded in agreement. "Exactly, and its conversion efficiency is extremely high. Around a hundred apprentices would be able to muster a Level-10 attack with their combined Mana. On the other hand, only 20 Magicians above Level-5 would be needed for such an attack."

"What about the crystal's cost of production?" asked Eliard.

"Not at all high. On average, a piece of crystal would cost more than 70 gold pieces. With the added cost of alchemical potions required to exorcize the Ethereals from their host bodies, the total cost would amount to around 130 gold pieces. Also, these crystals can be used at least 100 times."

At this point, Eliard had fallen silent. A few seconds later, he said, "This Soul Crystal business feels a bit shady to me, but it would be a waste not to take advantage of it now. With this, the military might of Ferde would improve by leaps and bounds. Besides, these Ethereals aren't exactly peaceful beings. If they had just stayed in their own realm, none of this would have happened to them."

The risk of being reprimanded for violating the rights of these Ethereals seemed trivial in comparison to the immense profit that could be reaped from them. It was highly unlikely that there would be anyone who would go so far as to defend these evil spirits.

Evelina listened on to their discussion. She felt as if a whole new world had been laid out before her. In front of her stood not Magicians, but rather vulgar merchants who would do whatever it took to earn a buck. For some reason, she was not at all displeased at the way they handled things. Both Link and Eliard were fastidiously weighing the gains and losses of the matter at hand. They would only choose to do something if its gains weighed more.

Also, it seemed that Link's method of forging magical equipment with the souls of Ethereals would most certainly bring in a huge profit. Evelina was impressed by this.

Her gaze alternated between Eliard and Link for a few times. She then asked, "Can I join you guys in this?"

She did not believe that Link would lock her up indefinitely. She must have impressed him with her magic and talent. Her imprisonment was simply a way for him to tap into her skills. Why else would he have agreed to let Eliard watch over her? She was not one to sit quietly on the sidelines and let an opportunity like this pass her by.

Link smiled. He knew that a maiden bold enough to commit treason against the Isle of Dawn like her would find a way to spice things up. He then asked, "And what if we refuse you?"

"If you let me in on your plans, I'll tell you where you can find plenty of Ethereals and the safest spots to trap them. I'll even tell you the spatial coordinates of the Delou Ethereal Realm. If not, well, I won't tell you anything then."

Link and Eliard were stunned. This lady was incredible. She had betrayed the Ethereals to them at the drop of a hat with such thoroughness that even Link found it a bit too extreme. She had even suggested capturing these creatures from the Ethereal Realm, as if their complete eradication meant nothing to her at all.

But then, only a fool would refuse such an offer.

Link nodded. "It's a deal, then."

The three of them then continued their path through the city. A while later, the gates of Full Moon Kingdom's palace rose up before them. At that moment, Link whispered, "Before I forget, you seemed to have messed up Skinorse and Irvan quite badly back then. Try not to provoke them when you see them."

"Got it."

Eliard was the only one who was unaware of what had happened. Apprehensively, he asked, "What happened to Skinorse and the others?"

Link did not know how to tell him what happened. Thinking about it for a while, he said, "Physically, they're both alright. It's just that their prides have been somewhat



injured. Don't ask them about it later on. Just let the whole thing pass."

"If you say so." Eliard nodded, still confused.

At that point, the king of Southmoon Kingdom had returned to normal. The palace opened its gates to Link without much fuss. As they entered, there were a few attendants already waiting there to guide them through the labyrinth of corridors and alleyways until they finally reached a small courtyard on the western side of the palace.

"Skinorse and the others are in there. Our business here in Southmoon Kingdom has come to a close. After I'm done giving out my orders, we'll head north immediately."

Eliard looked at Link strangely. "What's the rush?"

"I fear that the High Elves will catch up with us if we stay here for too long."

Eliard was startled. They definitely needed to watch out for the High Elves. He then thought of a graver problem. "The Isle of Dawn would not give up their search so easily. If they were to come looking for Evelina in Ferde, what should we do then?"

Right now, Evelina was in their hands. It was simply out of the question to hand her over at this point. But Eliard had no say in the matter; the only one capable of putting up a fight with the Isle of Dawn was Link himself. It was up to him to decide what to do with her.

Evelina too looked at Link, waiting for a reaction from him. She would literally be sent to her death if he succumbed to the Isle of Dawn's demands to hand her over to the High Elves.

Link laughed. "Of course we won't hand her over. If we do, the information on the Ethereals will forever be out of our grasp. Once we get back to Ferde, we'll wait for the High Elves to make the first move. Then we'll proceed as planned at the first chance we can get."

# Chapter 537

## The Bluff (1)

In the end, Evelina still saw Skinorse's group.

Skinorse didn't mind. He was always more forgiving to beautiful girls and forgot what had happened after seeing Evelina's delicate features. Instead, he started worrying over her injuries.

"Oh, you seem to be heavily wounded. Are you okay? Do you need Moya to check?"

Hearing that, Priest Moya couldn't help but scoff. She shot a look at Skinorse. Even though Skinorse and Irvan didn't say anything after coming back, Moya was skilled and could tell what was wrong with someone at a glance.

For example, she could tell where Irvan was hurt by how he walked. Skinorse also looked like an unconfident pervert. Moya had a basic idea of what had happened after asking some more questions.

Seeing Skinorse like this now, she felt that he was beyond saving.

Irvan had escaped early this morning. What had happened yesterday had traumatized him. He couldn't face anyone who knew the details.

Evelina was caught by surprise too. She smiled at Skinorse and asked, "It seems that you really liked it. Want to do it again?"

Skinorse's expression changed, and he waved his hand quickly. "No, no, no. One time is enough, it's enough."

Everyone in the room looked at him speechlessly.

Getting to the point, Link said, "We're preparing to return to Ferde. Skinorse, what are your plans?"

"Continuing to explore, of course. I almost have enough Jogus." Skinorse grew serious.

This was what he'd been working on all this time.

"Good, I'll prepare it for you when I return. Oh, you're Moya, right?" Link thought of something after seeing the female priest.

"Yes, Lord." Moya bowed respectfully.

"I heard about you from Kanorse. He said that not only are you skilled in healing spells, you also have many unique methods for saving one's life. Ferde opened an academy for doctors recently. I'm the dean right now. If you're interested, you can be the new dean."

Kanorse had said that Moya was the best at emergency treatments. Oftentimes, she didn't even need spells. Those spells were just the icing on the cake for her.

Link had created the strong Sunlight Army. Each soldier had powerful recovery abilities. If they were wounded on the battlefield, they would just need some basic emergency treatment. They wouldn't need Light spells to recover.

Thus, if there were enough emergency personnel, the death rate of his army would lower a lot.

Even better, it wasn't hard to learn Moya's tactics. A regular person could learn it too, and this was what Link needed. As for the academy, it didn't exist yet. But if they had a dean and enough resources, it could be established quickly...

Hearing that, Skinorse grew upset. "Hey, Lord, you're unethical. Moya is our friend. You can't just dig her away so shamelessly."

Link really had no shame. Smiling, he said, "Adventures will get old someday and need a way out. Plus, Moya is a girl. Are you really willing to make her risk her life with you?"

"Uh..." Skinorse was swayed. He usually acted recklessly and did ridiculous things, but Moya was different to him. She had an important place in his heart. If she had somewhere safe to go, he would support it.

An academy's dean would live comfortably and be respected. It sounded nice.

"Moya, what do you think?" Skinorse asked.

Moya was interested too. "Me? I want to, but if I go, you won't last one month. I'll pass."

Skinorse was even more convinced after this. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Go if you want. Nothing bad will happen with our skills, right Morrigan?"

Morrigan nodded. "Just go, Moya."

Moya still shook her head. "But..."

Link chuckled. "You're worried about Skinorse, right? Don't worry."

As he spoke, he took out three runestones. Dragon Power wrapped around them, and a few minutes later, they became red crystals. Giving them to Skinorse, he said, "These are Seething Vitality runes. Take one each and keep them with you. If you're hurt, it will heal you automatically. Each stone can heal 15 fatal injuries. Even if your arm is broken, you can press it onto the injury, and it'll reconnect your arm. Moya, what do you think?"

Skinorse immediately took the stones and chuckled. "This is good." Then he said to Moya, "Go, go. Do well as the dean and your name will be written down in history. Then people who talk about you will mention me too. I'll get some fame."

Moya finally nodded. "My honor, Lord."

Link smiled and nodded. He was very happy. Turning to Skinorse, he said, "Then we'll leave now. Also, tell Irvan that he only needs to find 50 Jogu for me to make him a Legendary bow."

"Got it. I'll tell him." Skinorse actually felt guilty towards Irvan. Skinorse was the one who'd benefited a bit from earlier. If he got laid like that, he wouldn't be able to take it.

After that, Link left the yard and gave some orders to the servants sent by the king. Then he used the Void Walk to take the others back to Ferde.

Though he had three people with him, the entire journey only took half an hour. When they reached Ferde, Link was still energetic. He didn't look tired at all.

Evelina had been trying to calculate Link's power. Seeing this, she was even more impressed. All her plans were destroyed now. She started to seriously consider joining

Ferde.

When they reached Ferde, Link said to Eliard, "Take her back. You're her guard now, so you can decide where you want her imprisoned. Choose wherever you want."

"Alright, no problem." Eliard took Evelina away.

Link turned to Moya. "Come, I'll take you to see Manager Lucy. She'll arrange the things with the academy."

"Okay." Moya was happy; she was excited about the academy.

Though she had a lot of Sacred Power, her knowledge was far from those official priests from the Sacred City. She'd learned informally and could now become the dean of an academy. This was satisfying.

Along the way, Moya asked casually, "Lord, where is the academy?"

Link smiled. "The location is chosen already. It's in the east of the city and will be around 100 acres. It hasn't been built though, and we're still enrolling students. You'll be the first dean."

Moya wasn't gullible. She chuckled dryly. "So you're saying that it doesn't exist yet?"

Link felt a bit awkward. "I think that 100,000 coins should be enough to build a nice academy. I'll send Magicians from the Mage Tower to help with the buildings for free. What do you think?"

The benefits were great. Moya thought for a bit and decided this was better. She could build the academy herself according to her wishes. She would be the founder of the academy.

"Alright, that's not bad." She nodded.

After finding Lucy, Link explained simply, and Lucy quickly provided the money. Ferde's treasury was doing well now and made a profit of more than 200,000 coins per month. She'd been wondering how to spend the money. The academy came at the right time.

After giving 100,000 coins, Lucy asked, "Lord, is that enough? How about 150,000

coins?"

"You have enough?" Link asked in shock. He wasn't that familiar with the territory's situation.

"Of course."

"Oh, then 150,000."

Moya was even more satisfied. She had room to work with now.

Getting the money, Link notified Jacker and some others. The matter was set now. The upper level of Ferde all knew Moya, so the academy was on the fast track.

To Link, this academy was only a small detail in his grand plan. After arranging everything, he returned to the Mage Tower and started planning on how to deal with the High Elves.

There wasn't anything he could say about the High Elves coming for their people. Ferde was in the wrong, and they should hand her over. But he couldn't do it, so what should he do?

Link got an idea. He would use terror.

The High Elves came to reason with them, but Link wouldn't win that. He had to use power. Competition between the races had always followed the law of the jungle.

Imagine one man who was tall, burly, and powerful. The other was frail, thin, and weak. The strong man wanted to take the weak man's pretty wife. The strong guy was wrong, but the weak guy couldn't beat him. He could only accept reality.

But there was another problem. Ferde wasn't as strong as the Isle of Dawn. Link couldn't scare them at all.

What should he do?

There was another option: bluffing.

In the forest, some harmless snakes looked just as terrifying as poisonous snakes. They weren't threatening at all, but to the others, they were too powerful to be

touched.

Ferde had to look like they were poisonous.

How should he bluff?

Link took out what he'd gotten from the South. Placing the crystals on the table, he counted 95. Thirteen of them had amazing quality and could transform Legendary power at the highest rate.

Thirteen Ethereal Crystals can create 13 Legendary magic equipment. If I use it well, they can emit 13 types of Legendary auras... Hmm, I'll have to arrange this well.

# Chapter 538

## The Bluff (2)

On this day, the sun shone brightly while the sea breeze rolled in gently.

Seagulls screeched in the sky, squabbling with each other over scraps thrown out by the guests of a nearby inn. A few kids frolicked around the port's open plaza. Near the docks, workers called out to each other as they bustled about, loading and unloading cargo from their ships. Further away, shop houses were in the midst of construction.

It was an ordinary day like any other.

At noon, a seemingly ordinary merchant vessel appeared on the horizon. It slowly made its way towards the port of Ferde.

High Elf merchant ships were a familiar sight to the port's inhabitants. Though nothing stood out from it on the surface, this particular merchant ship was different from the others that came before it.

On the outside, the merchant ship and its deck seemed normal enough. In reality, it had an extremely spacious hold beneath its deck. Only a small portion of that space was reserved for holding cargo. The rest of it was emptied out for its passengers. There was even enough space for a great hall.

It was lunchtime. In the ship's great hall, eight High Elves were seated around a long table. The three High Elf Legendary masters, Bryant, Sonya and Milose were in their midst.

The other five High Elves were no ordinary folk. One of them was a young High Elf who bore a resemblance to the Elf Princess Milda and was almost as old as her. He was Prince Phillip, who also happened to have been saved by Link once. The four High Elves around him were among the best diplomats and negotiators the Isle of Dawn had to offer.

When the port of Ferde appeared before their ship, the voice of a sailor called out to them from the deck, "Your Highnesses, Ferde is just ahead of us."



Hearing this, Bryant turned to Sonya and Milose. "It's time. Go get ready."

"Yes, Prophet." The two young Magicians wiped their mouths clean with their napkins. They then rose from their seats. With a slight movement, their bodies dissolved into a green mist and vanished from the ship's hold.

The merchant's vessel was just a facade. Its true cargo were the negotiators inside its hold. Six Silver Storm Sparrow ships hung back a few thousand feet from the merchant's vessel. If anything went wrong, the Silver Storm Sparrow's magic spells would descend upon the port of Ferde in retaliation, which would result in grievous injuries on both sides.

Of course, this was only a contingency plan. If Ferde would peacefully accept their terms, they would not need to resort to violence.

There were two reasons as to why the High Elves preferred a peaceful resolution with Ferde.

The first one was that the Army of Destruction had amassed its forces in the northern region. The Isle of Dawn needed the humans to be their first line of defense against the Army of Destruction there.

The second reason was that Ferde now possessed a powerful army of 30,000 men. It also had a Legendary master watching over it. They could not possibly ignore such military might. Even if the High Elves were to act against Ferde, they still had to make thorough preparations for such a confrontation.

The merchant's vessel continued on its path. Prince Phillip had just finished his meal as well.

He had been to Hot Springs City. Back then, Link was the one who had rescued him. He had felt much gratitude for what he had done. Even now, Prince Phillip still had a high opinion of Link.

It was a shame, though, that good and evil never meant much when it came to dealing with interracial issues.

"Prophet, do you think he'll be willing to hand her over?" Phillip asked. Deep down, he knew that Link would resist. He still remembered the time they met at the magic market. Back then, Link had faced off against three masters all on his lonesome

without even a hint of panic. He had beaten all three of them up, leaving two dead and one running off with his tail between his legs.

There was no way someone with a strong will like Link's would ever submit so easily to others.

Even Bryant could not say anything for sure. He was silent for a moment. Then, he spoke, "If what we've heard of Ferde's military strength is true, Link will probably hand Evelina over to us. He's an intelligent man, and the port is the lifeline of Ferde."

Phillip was no longer the naive young man he was before. He sighed. "I hope so."

After a moment of silence, he asked again, "What will happen to Evelina? Will she really be executed?"

Though Evelina was a half-elf, she had lived in the High Elf royal palace, Andwar ever since she was little. Phillip knew her for as long as he could remember. Among the High Elf Princesses, Evelina was always so full of life and good-tempered. He would always follow her around wherever she went when Phillip was still a child.

They had played many pranks together, like the time when they threw a beehive into a guard post where the imperial guards were having their afternoon naps. There was also that one time when they poured unicorn urine into the wine barrels in the wine cellar. At a banquet on the next day, most guests felt that the wine did not taste quite right, but finished their glasses anyway out of courtesy. A wide smile would spread across Phillip's face every time he thought of all the pranks he pulled together with Evelina.

But now, they had both grown up. With the power she possessed, Evelina posed a real threat to the safety of the Isle of Dawn. She had even defected from the Isle of Dawn. As a High Elf prince, Phillip was ordered by her mother to bring back this traitor to the island.

Big Sis Evie, why would you do this? Phillip sighed inwardly.

In truth, he knew the answer to this question. But he could not bring himself to say it out loud. He was also powerless to change anything.

Bryant too had conflicted feelings about this. Due to her half-elf identity, Evelina had suffered constant discrimination from the other High Elves. As a former human

Magician, Bryant's life was also anything but an easy one. He understood more than anyone what Evelina was going through. His granddaughter had paid the ultimate price for it.

After a long silence, Bryant finally said, "Probably not. Once we bring her back, the elders will then decide her fate."

This meant that certain death awaited Evelina back on the island. The elders had already made their decision, and they had all come to the conclusion that Evelina would be sentenced to death if any evidence of her committing treason against the Isle of Dawn could be found. Evelina had indeed betrayed them and nearly killed Elován.

They fell silent again.

A while later, Phillip asked, "Will there be war between us and Ferde?"

This time, Bryant's reply came immediately. His voice did not waver as he spoke, "Yes."

"Why?"

Bryant thought about this for a moment, then settled on using a metaphor as his reply. "If Firuman was a mountain, then we High Elves would be the tiger living in it. Before the rise of Ferde, all the prey living in the mountain belonged only to us. The whole world belonged to us. We were rich and peaceful. But now, another tiger has appeared on the same mountain. The two tigers would then fight over their share of the mountain until they starve each other out."

Phillip tried to argue. "But there are only 3 million people on the Isle of Dawn. The imported goods we received are all stacked up high in our warehouses every year. Most of the excess food is simply left in it to rot. It is obvious that the yearly supply of resources we receive greatly dwarfs our demand."

Bryant shook his head and smiled. "We may have enough, but to the human race, it will never be enough. Ferde represents the entire human race. This particular tiger has a huge appetite. It will not stop growing. Once it reaches a certain point of maturity, the whole world won't even be enough to sate this beast's hunger. No one will be able to rival its strength. When that happens, our race will be at the mercy of the humans."

The human race occupied the richest regions of Firuman. There were more than three

hundred million of them, a few hundred times more than the High Elves. If they were allowed to develop freely, it would be a complete calamity for not just the High Elves, but the other races of Firuman as well.

It was not that the High Elves were incapable of harmonious coexistence with the humans. Rather, they would not be able to bear the consequences of letting the humans flourish rampantly, which was why they had endeavored for so long to maintain the power balance between the kingdoms on the continent.

Prince Phillip now understood somewhat the relationship between the two races.

He looked out of a porthole. Outside, a magnificent port built out of huge white stone had entered into view. Hundreds of merchant vessels were parked around the docks, forming a forest of masts bobbing gently on the water. A magnificent lighthouse stood in the distance. Rows of houses were arranged neatly around it while people swarmed the streets. Farther still, more houses were being built.

The whole port was brimming with so much life, and energy one might not find back on the Isle of Dawn.

The port was massive, perhaps three times bigger than Monoson, the biggest port on the Isle of Dawn. This all came into fruition in the span of merely two years.

At that moment, Phillip felt the threat that the humans posed to them.

"Prophet, if we go to war with them, will we win?" asked Phillip.

Bryant looked out at the port and let out a soft moan. He then said, "Can't say for sure. What we do know is that we are a lot stronger than Ferde right now, and we are positioned strategically well in comparison to the humans. Alright, let's not discuss this any further. Ship's entering the port. When you meet the Lord of Ferde, remember not to show any sign of weakness, no matter what happens. I'll be right beside you."

"I understand." Prince Phillip nodded. He calmed himself down, stood up and climbed out onto the deck. Bryant walked beside him, and they were then followed from behind by their entourage of diplomats.

Once the ship entered the port, the High Elves immediately headed towards the port administration office to show their papers. When the officers confirmed that it was the High Elf prince himself, they immediately summoned extravagant carriages for

them, which then drove them straight towards Scorched City.

Prince Phillip and Bryant were in the same carriage. The prince looked out of the window at the wide, smooth road ahead of them. He murmured to himself in surprise, "He's already expecting us."

There was no way he would have prepared all this in such short notice.

Bryant remained impassive to their extravagant reception. "Don't think too much about it. This is his domain after all. He should already know we're coming. There's nothing to be too surprised about."

Phillip nodded and tried to keep himself calm.

...

When the High Elves' carriages drove towards Scorched City, Link, Vance, and the others were making their final adjustments to the magical houses.

There were thirteen magical houses. They were all hastily built and distributed across different parts of Scorched City. Each house contained a huge number of Magicians. They were all assigned the task of focusing their power into ethereal equipment. The magical houses also concealed their collective auras and only allowed Legendary power aura to seep out from within.

From a far enough distance, it would seem as if each house contained a Legendary master in it.

Ten seconds later, Link began collecting the results of the Magicians' test runs.

"Everything normal in magical house number one."

"Everything fine in number two."

"Sunlight Power leaking out from number three, proceeding to turn off power."

"Number four..."

Out of all thirteen magical houses, only two reported malfunctions and were forced to power down. On the other hand, the other eleven were operational and capable of

carrying out Link's deception.

"Thirteen Legendary masters (eleven magical houses plus Link and Evelina), this will surely give those High Elves a good scare!" Vance laughed out loud.

According to Evelina, the High Elves had five Legendary masters at the moment. Four of them had only recently reached Legendary. This was impressive in itself, but now, thirteen Legendary masters had sprung up in Ferde, which was more than what the High Elves had at their disposal!

Legendary masters were not to be trifled with. Anyone would be scared witless by such power.

# Chapter 539

## The Bluff (3)

### Scorched Ridge

"Whoa!" A coachman stopped his carriage not far from the Mage Tower's entrance.

The door opened, and Bryant came out first. He looked up at the looming Mage Tower and lamented on how it had transformed again after the past couple of months. He could barely recognize it now.

Many Magicians scurried past him, all seeming to be in a rush. They were either discussing magic together or going straight to another building. No one was lost; everyone had a definite goal.

Even more surprising was that each Magician had a strange aura. It was warm and seemed to glow. Everyone was filled with energy. None of the dozens of apprentices that walked by looked fatigued as most Magicians were.

What power is this? I've never seen it before. Bryant was shocked.

Thump. Prince Phillip also jumped down from the carriage. He looked around, impressed. The Mage Tower was honestly too majestic, especially the main tower. It was hundreds of feet tall and even had a wide circular platform at the top. A beautiful Mana net covered the platform while countless beautiful flowers bloomed on it. They were colorful, battling each other with their beauty.

Prince Phillip couldn't help but praise, "What a great garden in the sky."

At this time, all the other High Elves descended too. They grouped before Prince Phillip. During this time, the top level of the Mage Tower probably received the report already, but no one came to welcome them. It seemed that the group of High Elves would be left on this square alone.

People walked to and fro, but the Magicians just glanced at them before turning and going back to their work. They were ignored.

Prince Phillip felt a bit awkward. "So, should we go knock on the door?"

"The Ferde lord is too impolite," a High Elf said angrily.

"Yeah, he's becoming more and more arrogant," another said.

Just as they were all venting their anger, something flashed in the air for three seconds. An arch of pure light appeared. Within it, there was a white dot that expanded rapidly until it filled the entire arch. An image rippled within it like water. At a closer inspection, it looked like a banquet.

"What's this?" Prince Phillip turned to Bryant. He knew this was a portal, but it appeared so strangely. He was a bit scared to step into it.

Bryant sighed inwardly. A few months after their last meeting, Link's tricks had improved again. It was as if he could just casually control spatial magic.

Bryant took the lead to walk towards the portal. At the same time, he said, "Let's go. This is the Ferde lord's portal. He's welcoming us."

With that, he stepped in. The image before him suddenly turned, and he was standing on an open platform. Flowers surrounded him. There was a long table before him, with beautiful girls busying with the food, flitting around like butterflies.

Every girl was beautiful. Even though they wore the same clothes, each had their own unique characteristics. Some were pure as jade; others were sexy and alluring. Others showed tempting long legs, and Bryant couldn't help but steal more glances.

He quickly realized the secret though. These girls were all magic puppets. I wonder which bastard designed the appearance, he had to lament again. They're so tempting.

Collecting his thoughts, he looked to the head of the table.

Link sat there. He wore a thorny crystal-red headpiece and a dark red robe with silver markings. Six people sat to his sides, all dressed elegantly.

Bryant had checked their profiles in the High Elves' Hand of Night. He knew all of them. Starting from Link's left side, they were Death Scythe Celine, Link's companion; half-elf Eliard; Vance, creator of Combat Aura Studies; Alloa, the Maiden of Truth; Secret Magician Eleanor; and Elin, the Lady Fortuna of the Yabbas.



In other words, all core figures of Ferde were present.

Each of these six was at least Level-7. Eliard had reached Level-9, and his power was active. He would soon break into Level-10.

Of them all, Link's appearance was the most shocking to Bryant.

It wasn't just his overly elegant robe. The biggest shock was that Bryant could see that Link had a thin layer of Legendary power across his skin. Under this power, his skin looked like crystal. At a glance, Link gave off the feeling of an eternal statue that was filled with an Epic aura. Anyone who saw him would feel indescribably shocked as if he were a god instead of a human.

Paired with the six emotionless Magicians beside him, Link made Bryant feel that he was facing a group of gods.

Bryant could clearly feel pressure weighing down. But as a Level-12 Legendary Magician, he wouldn't get scared. He just thought, Link is really putting on a show.

Buzz. There were some soft sounds behind Bryant. Prince Phillip and four High Elf ambassadors walked out from the portals under the faint light.

They weren't as firm as Bryant. Faced with this scene, the five High Elves were obviously shaken. They couldn't say a word.

Bryant felt this and sighed inwardly. Seems that Phillip's men won't be of much help.

The light of power glowed faintly around him, adding an emerald sheen to his skin. He was here for support and couldn't lose in appearance.

He walked forward and bowed slightly to Link. "Duke, it seems that you knew we would come."

Bryant didn't call Link lord or by his name. He called him duke for a reason. He wanted to subtly affect the relationship between Link and Celine.

Link smiled. "I am not the duke of the dragons anymore. I am only Ferde's lord. Everyone, please sit."

He had explained his relationship with the dragons with Celine long ago. She wasn't

very happy at first. However, after all this time, they were familiar with each other's personality. Everything could be solved with a night in bed. The others also knew about his relationship with the dragons because he'd borrowed greatly from Dragon Power when making the Sunlight Power.

After the High Elves took their seats, Link waved at the magic puppet servants. They started serving delicate desserts for the High Elves.

Link chuckled. "I know that you all probably already had lunch, so I prepared some dessert. I hope you'll like it."

The desserts looked delicately-made, and the utensils were elegant too. This lowered the High Elves' defenses. Out of politeness, they all tried some.

A famous southern chef made these desserts. Not only were they pretty, but they were also delicious. The eyes of the High Elves brightened as soon as the food entered their mouths. They couldn't help but eat some more.

As the saying went, those who ate would be softened. This couldn't change their stances, but it was quite effective in relaxing the atmosphere.

The High Elves had come with a bunch of objections to Link. Now though, they were being officially welcomed in a beautiful garden in the air. Link seemed to have put a lot of thought into this. Their negative feelings softened a lot.

Prince Phillip couldn't help but glance around. He saw the flowers close to him and the vibrant city in the distance below him. He was at the peak right now. Taking in the vast scenery, he had to compliment, "This place really is nice."

Link smiled and entered the main topic. "Thank you for your praise. May I know your reason for coming?"

At this question, Prince Phillip motioned at his men. One High Elf handed a document to a magic puppet. She passed it to Link.

Link accepted it and scanned it. It was a verdict signed by their Elder Council aimed at half-elf Princess Evelina. It listed her many accusations. The gravest one was betraying the race.

"Evelina is a criminal of our race," Prince Phillip said. "The crimes she has committed

are enough to warrant the cruelest punishment of our race. We heard from Elován that she also committed a big crime in the Southmoon Kingdom. She almost destroyed their royal family. This is a disgrace to our race. We heard that she is currently being imprisoned in Ferde. We hope to somehow pay a ransom and take her back to the Isle of Dawn for judgment."

"Oh, I see," Link said ambiguously. He turned to Eliard. "Eliard, you are in charge of guarding Evelina, but I heard that she already escaped?"

"Guilt" filled Eliard's face. "Yes, Lord. I've failed you. You know that Evelina is very beautiful. I was tricked by her looks, and she escaped from the prison. I still haven't found her."

"What a horrible mishap," Link mused. Then he looked to Prince Phillip with "regret."

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. We failed at watching this criminal. You must know, Evelina is in the Legendary level. If she really wants to escape, it would be very hard to find any clue of how she'd escaped, so..."

His exchange with Eliard was so fake that even a regular person could tell something was wrong. Prince Phillip knitted his brows tightly.

The female ambassador behind him couldn't help but stand up and refute them. "Lord, we came with sincerity. We will compensate the losses Evelina brought to you in full. I hope you will repay with sincerity as well."

Link shrugged, still looking regretful. "I don't understand why you would think like this. Evelina indeed was our prisoner, but that's past tense. We have no clue where she is now. I admit that it's our mistake for not keeping an eye on her. I will punish Eliard, but honestly, this is our own problem. We aren't responsible for watching the Isle of Dawn's criminal. Don't you think you're minding someone else's business?"

The High Elves stared at each other speechlessly. It was clear that Link was denying things, but his explanation was logical too. If Evelina wasn't in Ferde, the High Elves couldn't do anything to Ferde.

They obviously wouldn't be able to find her in Ferde either. Since Link dared to say this, he must have hidden her well. She might even be in a room in this Mage Tower, but this was a critical location to Ferde. Unless they wanted to invade Ferde, the High Elves couldn't search it.

Bryant couldn't let them enter this stalemate.

He tapped the table and narrowed his eyes at Link. "Ferde Lord, you and I are both very clear about some things. I hope you understand what Ferde will receive and lose if you do this. After all, the Isle of Dawn is never gentle with enemies."

Link didn't give up his act. "Bryant, I don't know what you're saying. Evelina doesn't have anything to do with me or the territory. You can search throughout the continent. Ferde won't stop you."

It was a stalemate again.

Bryant frowned at Link. He didn't know what the man was planning. Had he gone crazy and wanted war with the Isle of Dawn?

But if he wanted that, why didn't he destroy the relationship now and just attack? This was his territory; he didn't have to use overt methods. He could just poison their desserts, and that would be enough, but he didn't do it.

He seemed to just want to take advantage of the Isle of Dawn. Confused, Bryant asked, "Link, the Isle of Dawn isn't weak. Aren't you being a bit too naive?"

If Link wanted to take advantage of a small thing, the Isle of Dawn would endure it to take care of the big picture. This was different though. Evelina was a powerful Legendary Magician. Link was trying to yank out a tiger's teeth. If he wanted to do it, he would have to give up his arm or even his head to the tiger.

Link just smiled, eyes crinkling. He exchanged glances with his Magicians and said, "To be honest, we have some formidable power too."

As he spoke, various Legendary auras emerged from different locations in Scorched Ridge. The auras were obscure and different from each other. Prince Phillip and the others couldn't feel anything, but it was like a psychological attack to Bryant, a fellow Legendary figure.

He shot up, eyes widening like saucers as he gaped at Link. "How is this possible?!"

# Chapter 540

## The Bluff (4)

Mage Tower, rooftop platform

Bryant's face had gone pale. A shiver ran through his body. The only thing that could unnerve a Legendary master like him was the presence of a power equal to or higher than his.

If there had only been two or three other Legendary masters, Bryant would not have batted an eye. But there were now 11 Legendary masters, which was more than enough to strike fear in him.

Bryant could sense the sudden appearances of these Legendary auras around him so vividly that he was surprised that Prince Phillip, who was standing beside him, did not notice anything unusual.

Phillip asked in a low voice, "Prophet, what's wrong?"

Bryant did not hear what he said. He was staring at Link for at least 20 seconds, dumbfounded. Finally, he asked, "How did Ferde manage to acquire this level of power? Were you able to make contact with the realm of Aragu?"

Realm of Aragu?

Link was impressed by Bryant's imagination. Since Bryant had come to such a conclusion by himself, Link decided not to reveal his secret. He laughed coldly. "This is the source of Ferde's might. Do you really think I would just tell you where I got it? As for the realm of Aragu, the Isle of Dawn would be wise to leave it alone. I have my ways of cutting off the passage between realms."

In truth, there were only a few ways of doing such a thing that Link was aware of. But there was no harm in him boasting about it to Bryant. Link's goal, after all, was to instill suspicion and dread in the High Elf.

Bryant fell silent again for a long while. He then opened his mouth and spoke, "Since

Evelina has fled from Ferde, then we have nothing more to discuss. Thank you for the feast you've prepared for us. We still have a traitor to pursue. We'd be most grateful if you would let us go back."

Saying this, he rose up and waited for Link to open up a portal.

He had admitted defeat.

Prince Phillip and the other diplomats had also hurriedly gotten up. Phillip walked to Bryant's side and muttered, "Prophet, are we leaving? Just like that?"

Negotiations had not even begun. Even though Link had admitted that Evelina was no longer in Ferde, Phillip figured that the amount of compensation they had offered Link was not enough. If Link had been properly incentivized, he might have been more willing to aid their search for Evelina. He might even be able to bring her to them on the same day.

Bryant's sudden decision to leave had left Phillip scratching his head in confusion.

Bryant shook his head. "There's nothing left to talk. No amount of compensation that we can offer would be enough to a Legendary master like Link. Let's go."

The number of Legendary masters he had sensed in the enemy's territory was enough to rival the Isle of Dawn's might. As of now, Ferde and the Isle of Dawn were now on equal standing. Unless both sides went to war with each other, there was no way the Isle of Dawn would be able to take back what had been theirs from Ferde.

This was a depressing stain on the history of the High Elves. For thousands of years, the Isle of Dawn had managed to prevent such a thing from happening. Right before their eyes, the humans had acquired such formidable power to match theirs. The world was indeed evolving at an unprecedented rate.

There was a soft hum, and a portal appeared once more. Bryant's gaze bore on Link. He said in a deep voice, "My lord, I do hope you'll place greater emphasis on the bigger picture. The Army of Destruction up north is our true enemy."

Conflict would be inevitable if tension persisted still between Ferde and the Isle of Dawn.

Link raised his wine glass and gently tipped its content over the edge of his lip. "We

humans are more aware of this than the Isle of Dawn."

He had accentuated the pronunciation of the word "humans," which pierced through Bryant like an arrow. Bryant trembled slightly, bitterness welling up in him.

He was once human, but he was also young and brash back then. In his pursuit of a love so pure and true, he gave up on his humanity and became a High Elf. To put it more precisely, he was no more than a lost spirit wearing a High Elf husk.

He regretted making such a decision hundreds of years ago. But now, there was no going back. He had to see his path through to the very end.

Dejected, he stepped into the portal without another word. The other High Elves then followed him through it.

Hum, hum, hum... An instant later, a few figures appeared in the magic arena. There were already a couple of horse carriages waiting for them there.

The High Elves then got onto their carriages in the same order as before. Bryant had got on his as well, though his thoughts had drifted off somewhere else.

Once inside their carriages, Prince Phillip immediately asked, "Prophet, what happened?"

"Ah?" Bryant snapped out of his reverie. He then let out a long sigh before explaining to Phillip, "There were 13 Legendary masters in Ferde, including the Lord of Ferde himself, and from the looks of things, there will soon be 14."

If he was not mistaken, the 14th Legendary master should be Eliard.

Phillip was speechless. There were only five Legendary masters in the Isle of Dawn, and now Ferde had twice that number. This was simply outrageous!

After a long silence, his eyes suddenly lit up. Hope sprang up in him as Phillip muttered, "Maybe they're just Legendary Warriors? If they're just Warriors, I don't think we have anything to be frightened of."

A Legendary Warrior would be able to mow down thousands of people on a battlefield with ease. This was an incredible feat, certainly deserving of the title of a God of War. But a Warrior's brute strength proved useful only in ground warfare. Even if there

were 13 of them, it was not something worth bragging about.

If these masters were all clumped up together, a high-level offensive area-of-effect spell would be able to eliminate them all in one hit.

Only a Legendary Magician had the power to alter the grand scheme of things to his or her favor.

A Legendary Magician may not be as skilled as a Legendary Warrior in one-on-one combat, but what made them redoubtable opponents was their vast knowledge of the powers of the world.

Legendary Magicians were capable of casting powerful magical formations and concocting potions with extremely potent effects. They could even forge unfathomable magical equipment and push the boundaries of knowledge with the fruits of their research. Through their profound wisdom, they were able to nurture the young talents of their race, paving the way to a brighter future through them.

If Ferde had 14 individuals with such power, the Isle of Dawn might as well concede this game of chess being played out on the chessboard known as Firuman.

Hearing Phillip's words, Bryant jerked up in surprise. He carefully recalled what he had felt back then and realized that he had made a mistake. He had assumed that since Link was a Magician himself, the other Legendary masters he had sensed must have been Magicians as well. But now, thinking back about it, they did not actually reveal themselves to him. Only the core Magicians of Ferde had attended the banquet on the rooftop. This was sufficient proof that the new Legendary masters were not as strong as the core Magicians. There was even a strong possibility that they were only Legendary Warriors.

"If that's the case, things may not be as bad as I had anticipated... Wait, no, something's not right." A change came over Bryant's face.

"What's wrong?" Prince Phillip's heart was now thumping hard against his chest upon seeing the perturbed expression on Bryant's face, dreading whatever terrifying conclusion the prophet had come to this time.

Bryant continued, "These new Legendary masters may not be as strong as Ferde's core Magicians. They may even be Legendary Warriors, which means that Ferde only has two Legendary Magicians, Link and Evelina, and 11 other Legendary Warriors. Here's



the problem now. These 11 Legendary Warriors did not just appear out of thin air. Link must have used some sort of secret technique to endow them with Legendary power, and he was able to do this in the span of a few months. This means that..."

At this point, Bryant's heart was racing as well. He did not dare finish his sentence.

Prince Phillip was able to fill in the blanks himself. His face had whitened. "Ferde is in possession of a secret technique that allows them to forge Legendary Warriors. With this technique, they can produce all the Legendary Warriors they need. This..."

Imagine for a moment that there were thousands of Legendary Warriors on the opposing side of a battlefield. These Legendary Warriors would also be armed with powerful magical equipment that Link had forged for them.

Who would be able to oppose such an army?

Despite only being skilled in ground warfare and battle techniques, Legendary Warriors manufactured this way could easily overpower any army with sheer number.

Both Phillip and Bryant were now filled with dread at the scenarios they had played out in their minds. They still did not know what was true or false, nor did they have any way of confirming their theories. Even so, it was better to be safe than sorry. Assuming that Link was indeed in possession of such a secret technique, the Isle of Dawn would not be able to win any war against him if they were not prepared for it.

Finally, Bryant said, "We'd best hurry back to the Isle of Dawn and report this to her Highness immediately."

Phillip nodded in agreement. "You're right, things have gone completely out of control."

In the midst of the two High Elves' discussion, the splendid horse carriage rattled down the road towards the port. A few Memory Crystals were hidden in a corner of the compartment, recording every word they spoke.

Bryant and Phillip were all so shaken by the sudden turn of events that they did not notice anything strange in their carriage. When they finally reached the port, the two of them got out of the carriage and boarded their ship without a moment's delay.

Half an hour later, the High Elves' merchant ship finally departed from the port. Another five minutes later, a green mist issued out of the ship and tore through the

sky towards the Isle of Dawn at unimaginable speed.

It was Bryant. He could not wait any longer to deliver his message back to the Isle of Dawn.

...

Ten minutes later, Link had retrieved the Memory Crystals from the horse carriage. He and the other Magicians listened intently to the conversation between Bryant and Prince Phillip.

When they had listened to the whole thing, Alloa was the first to speak. "Judging from his tone, Bryant does seem sure of his theory. When he left, he was quite shaken up by this."

Link nodded. "I even tried to provoke him a bit with that bit about humans. He had already seemed unsettled back then. He probably didn't even notice the Memory Crystals planted in his carriage. I think he's speaking the truth. What do the rest of you think about this?"

The crowd around them was silent, pondering on all the possible measures the Isle of Dawn would take against Ferde.

Three minutes later, Vance spoke, "I fear that the Isle of Dawn may overstep their boundaries."

Everyone was stunned at those words.

Overstep... their boundaries?

What boundaries?

# Chapter 541

## Maintain Balance of Power

The so-called "bottom line" was the foundation for both parties to maintain tacit cooperation. Now, Ferde and the Isle of Dawn's cooperation was built on the fact that both had to face the Destruction Army. In other words, the Isle of Dawn wouldn't mess around while the humans, led by Ferde, were facing the Destruction Army.

Once the Isle of Dawn felt that Ferde was a great threat, they might possibly break this tacit agreement.

Eliard didn't believe this. "Would they really?" he asked.

Vance shrugged. "I can't be certain, but from how they treated Evelina, they really care about their so-called tradition and noble bloodline. They might even see it as a glory they must protect with their life. They're probably able to do anything if their tradition is threatened."

Celine was also present, and she didn't believe it. "I don't think so. There are less than three million High Elves. Once war starts, even if we sacrifice 100 men for one High Elf, we'll lose one billion people and have three billion left. The High Elves, though, would be at risk of extinction. Plus, is their tradition really that important?"

"Yes, very important," a bright voice rang out. It was Elin.

She stood up on her chair, pushing against the table. Her large and bright eyes were serious. Of course, to others, she looked adorable. People would want to pinch her pink cheeks.

But the Magicians present wouldn't do that. They all perked up their ears to listen to Lady Fortuna.

"Any ancient race in Firuman would place importance on tradition," Elin said seriously. "The High Elves, dragons, dwarves, and my Yabbas are all like this. Tradition is the precious experience accumulated over the years. It is the sign that guides a race's ship safely through the river of time. We follow these traditions to live in Firuman for longer

and better... However, emphasizing tradition can be both a blessing and curse. Especially when faced with a drastic change, tradition can be the biggest obstacle."

At the end, Elin was a bit down. She'd thought of her own race.

She'd predicted that a huge catastrophe would fall and encouraged her people to move south since the beginning. It had been useless though. They didn't want to leave the land that they'd lived in for thousands of years. They believed that their power could save them, but in the end, they almost went extinct.

Looking at everyone present, Elin said seriously, "The High Elves are difficult to deal with because they're truly powerful. Their Magician army has no match, but they're easy to deal with too. They are a very steady race; they won't make any risks. You can find something similar in history for everything they do."

Here, Elin looked to Link. "History tells us that, when faced with an existential crisis like this, the High Elves would go past any bottom line to save themselves. During the Mana catastrophe 3000 years ago, they did that. That time, their actions forced a faction to flee into a dark region and become the Dark Elves of today. Three hundred years ago during Bryant's era, the High Elves did the same thing. At that time, Bryant had the ambition to empower humans. The so-called love wasn't everything to him. However, he gave up in the end. There were some secret things that were too terrifying. You know what the end result was: he became one of the High Elves."

Elin finished, and the Magicians in the garden all fell silent.

After a pregnant pause, Link clapped. "What has passed has passed, but the future is still uncertain. We must strengthen ourselves. The fastest way to become stronger is with the Ethereal Crystal. Not only should we use it to create more Ethereal equipment for Magicians, but we can also make them for powerful Sunlight Warriors. The more Ethereal Crystals we have, the stronger we become. Any objections?"

Everyone present had witnessed the benefits to Ethereal Crystals. Coupled with Elin's willingness to help, it greatly reduced the risks. No one would refuse such an easy benefit.

"No objections," Vance said first.

"I am interested in the power of Ethereals," Allos, Maiden of Truth, said. "Not only can they directly help us become stronger, but the Mana structures are also abnormally

intriguing. It is valuable to study. Thus, the more crystals like this, the better."

Secret Girl Eleanor smiled. "I pity those Ethereals, but since they like Firuman, we should let them stay here forever."

Finally, Elin raised her small hand and said seriously, "The Yabbas wish to join this hunt."

It passed unanimously.

Link nodded. "Very good. We still have to perfect the way to catch Ethereals. It isn't mature yet."

Perhaps due to Link's influence as lord, the people of Ferde gradually started having the habit of doing everything efficiently. Once they decided on something, they would get to it immediately without wasting any time.

Since everyone agreed now, they immediately moved from the garden to the alchemy and enchantment rooms in the Mage Tower. Everyone worked together to create a strong Ethereal catching tool.

Just as Ferde was feverishly raising their strength, Bryant returned to the Isle of Dawn. Once there, he hurried to Andwar, the High Elf palace in the heart of the island, without stopping.

The Isle of Dawn was less than 200 miles in radius. With Bryant's speed, the giant tree that rose into the clouds appeared in his vision two minutes later. This tree was truly huge. It was more than 600 feet tall, and the trunk was over 180 feet wide. The treetop was spread out like a giant green umbrella.

Emerald light shone down from between the leaves and branches. When the light reached the air, it would turn into floating balls of light. These light balls spread out, some entering the dirt, others scattering into even smaller balls. They kept dividing until the air had a tinge of green.

This was Level-19 Natural magic!

Even a god couldn't see the mysteries of the World Tree. The High Elves' palace was under this tree.

Andwar had beautiful light purple buildings. The outer walls were covered in silver, magic veins. The ground was made of jade tiles. Along the path, there was a lamp tree every few steps, glowing softly.

The entire city was mysterious, intricate, peaceful, and serene. Here, Bryant's heart, frustrated from the visit to Ferde, gradually calmed down. He knew this was the power of the tree.

On the Isle of Dawn, every aged elf's last dream would be to accompany the mother tree of the world for eternity.

Bryant breathed out deeply. He slowed and walked down the jade path. While walking, he organized his thoughts. By the time he reached Hierdani (in Elfin, it means "pavilion of starry slumber"), his heart was completely at peace.

He saw the queen at the entrance.

Barefoot, she leaned against a lamp tree. Gazing emotionlessly at Bryant, she said, "I can feel the anxiety within you. Bryant, tell me about Ferde."

Bryant bowed and recounted everything that had happened.

The queen listened quietly. Her brows would sometimes furrow but would quickly smooth again. When Bryant finished, she sighed. "This isn't good news, but it's not the first disaster we have experienced, nor will it be the last one. Bryant, I have a secret mission for you."

Surprised, Bryant said, "Yes."

"Go to the Black Forest in the North and ensure that the northern army and human army have balanced power... Do you understand?"

Bryant bowed slightly. "Yes, Your Majesty."

He knew that this simple command meant that countless lives on the continent would be lost. It wouldn't be thousands or tens of thousands. In the end, it might lead to millions, close to tens of millions.

But these lives would not be High Elves, so they didn't care.

It wasn't the first time the High Elves would do something like this, nor would it be the last time. Everything was done for the safety of the residents of this island.

# Chapter 542

## Capturing the Ethereal Prince

On the outside, the South was bustling with activity as always.

Golle Kingdom, which housed the largest port in the South, had grown so prosperous that it was known as the "money bag of the Free Trade Federation."

The accumulation of wealth naturally drew much-unwanted attention to the kingdom. This had always been the case in the past. The thieves of the Syndicate were not immune to the lure of the kingdom's prosperity.

The Syndicate issue was especially serious in Golle Kingdom.

...

Golle Kingdom, Port Antique

Ding, ding... A clear bell sounded as a merchant vessel slowly entered the port. As it approached the dock, ten or so people disembarked from their sampans. These were the passengers of the merchant's vessel.

Once on the dock, two men and two women quickly left the crowd. All four of them were disguised as normal travelers. The clothes they had put on were somewhat worn. One of the men had black hair, while the other had dark green hair. They were dressed in almost the same way, wearing leather armors, and equipped with steel swords dangling from their waists. One of the two women was wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a long dress woven with a coarse fabric. The other woman had hidden her face behind a mask and was wearing a conspicuously oversized leather armor which had tufts of fur coming out of its edges.

The party of four walked along a small alley and before long integrated themselves with the throng of people like fish in the great ocean.

Half an hour later, the four people appeared before the entrance of an inn called "Adventurer" to the west of the port city. The black-haired man was first to approach



the counter. He handed ten silver coins to the innkeeper. "One large room for the four of us."

"No problem." The innkeeper giddily put the silver coins in a drawer and took out a large copper lock. "Third floor, just follow the signs, and you'll find it. Here's your key and lock. Don't lose them."

The black-haired man nodded and beckoned at his companions. The other three followed behind him as they walked up the stairs.

Once they were inside their room and the door was securely locked, the black-haired man cast a magical barrier around them. The young woman wearing the leather armor let out a long sigh and laughed. "Finally, some fresh air. It was really stuffy back in the ship."

Saying this, she sat on a chair in the corner and began wiping her long magic rifle with a piece of deerskin cloth.

The magic rifle was a pale blue from tip to stock, and it gleamed with the faint light of magic runes. Three delicate lenses were equipped on its barrel. There was also a rune crystal with a diameter of about an inch on the middle of the barrel.

Its user was apparently quite fond of its exquisite details, which contrasted with its rather crude design. Such a magical item befitted the woman's status, which one could infer from her luxurious garment.

The woman was Celine. The other three in the room were Link, Eliard and Evelina.

Link had seated himself on a chair as well. He held in his hand a dark red, hollowed-out metal ball which was as big as a fist. He began inspecting the magical runes contained within. He then said, "Evelina, I trust your injuries have healed by now?"

Evelina took down her wide-brimmed hat and handed it over to Eliard. She then undid her cape and threw it onto a clothes-rack nearby. Finally, she stretched out her arms rather sensually before Eliard, who could not help but stare at her.

She glanced at Eliard and grinned, satisfied by his reaction. Evelina then said, "My father's part of the dragon race. I've been recuperating for half a month. I would be damned if my injuries were not healed by now."

Link began infusing his Dragon Power into the hollow metal ball. With a whoosh, a spherical display of countless magical runes with a diameter of more than twenty inches spread out. The runes floated in the air, twinkling like intricate constellations. They felt almost palpable.

The ball was an Ethereal Trapper of the highest level that they had created. Its main purpose was to capture the entity pulling the strings of the Ethereal Warriors, the Ethereal Prince.

The Ethereal Prince was extremely crafty. Even with the leads that Evelina had provided, Ferde's scouts had searched for him for half a month and was only able to estimate that the Ethereal Prince was currently in Golle Kingdom.

The Ethereal Prince was also very powerful. He was not something a normal Warrior would be able to deal with himself. Naturally, any Ethereal Crystal made using the Prince as its material would also be extremely powerful. Link needed such a crystal to forge a strategic-level set of magical equipment, and so he had personally come down south with the other three to capture the Ethereal Prince.

He tested the magical runes for a bit. Then he said, "I think that should do it."

After completing another one of his tests, Link spoke again, "I think I've found an answer to the problem concerning the purification of Dragon Power that you asked me back on the ship. My answer is: I can't do it, but Gretel the Red Dragon Queen may be able to."

Hearing him mention Gretel, Celine raised her head to look at Link. She was a bit sensitive about any subject concerning the Red Dragon Queen. When she saw that Link remained expressionless, she lowered her head in relief and resumed inspecting her magic rifle.

Evelina was disappointed. "I see. I hear that the Red Dragon Queen isn't an easy person to get along with. She's a fossil like the High Elves. If she actually agrees to help me purify my Dragon Power, chances are she'll apply limitations to it as per the customs of the dragon race. I am curious, though. Link, you managed to receive the Heart of the Dragon, and yet, here you are, far away from Dragon Valley. How did you do it?"

Link was almost finished with his adjustments of the Ethereal Trapper. He put away the metal ball and walked to Celine's side. He then began looking over her new rifle

for her.

For this mission, Link had made some improvements to her rifle. A large number of Ethereal runes and an Ethereal crystal had been added to it. Her shots were now capable of inflicting Level-11 damage. With its spatial acceleration ability and Celine's clairvoyant talent, there was no escaping from her bullets.

Of course, such power always came at a great cost. Celine was required to use Dragon Power bullets specially made by Link for her. These bullets were exquisitely designed. Each contained 1000 Dragon Power points. At the moment, Celine only had 5 Dragon Power bullets. Though she still had other bullets at her disposal, they were all normal ones, each with only Level-9 power.

While inspecting her rifle, Link noticed that Celine was especially fixated on this subject. He had guessed what was on her mind. With no intention of hiding the truth from her, Link said, "One thing led to another, I guess. At the time, the dragon race was in need of powerful masters, and I had just attained Dragon Power by accident. At the same time, the Red Dragon Queen thought that she could control me, and so she brought me to the Ancestor Altar."

Saying this, Link stopped inspecting the rifle and began scrutinizing Celine's hand. The back of her hand was soft and white, but her palm was slightly callused, the result of her rigorous training in marksmanship and swordplay. Celine did not pull her hand back from him.

"And then?" Link's story had piqued Eliard's interest. He pulled out another chair and sat on it beside Evelina.

"I managed to obtain the Heart of the Dragon, and when I brought out my Dragon form, it was not the Red Dragon that they had hoped, but rather a Black Dragon. The elders were quite shocked by this, because to them, a Black Dragon is another word for the herald of destruction." Link chuckled at the memory.

"Herald of destruction?" Evelina laughed too. "That's just preposterous. It should have meant 'bringer of change.' I guess it shouldn't be too surprising, since change is exactly what ancient races like the dragons fear most of all."

Link nodded and continued, "True. A series of events happened later, the most significant of which was the time I helped the dragon race defeat a Void Tyrant that

had infiltrated our realm. The Red Dragon Queen assumed that I would be able to integrate into the dragon race, and so she made me a Dragon Duke. She assumed wrong, of course. In the end, we parted ways due to the widening gap between our opinions on many things. All of you probably knew the rest of the story. I had wanted to build an army of Dragon Warriors among the human race, but she thought that it was an act of blasphemy against the royal dragon bloodline. She also thought the status quo they had upheld for so long was the safest path to walk on, and that my actions would eventually bring ruin to the human race. We did not split on good terms. My dragon body was even sealed off by her."

Celine seemed visibly upset about this. She twisted her lips. "Humph, I don't think Dragon Power's all that impressive. How selfish can she be?"

Link nodded. "Haha, true. Our Seed of Sunlight may not be as potent as Dragon Power, but in terms of combat power, it certainly holds a candle to Dragon Power itself. That should be enough. However, the road ahead of us is uncertain as ever. The Red Dragon Queen may be right for worrying. One misstep is all it would take to send the human race not on a path towards glory, but plunge it deep into the depths of despair."

His last statement sounded so ominous that the other three could not help but shiver upon hearing it.

The path that Ferde had set out on was indeed fraught with as much peril as climbing up a steep rock face.

Eliard chuckled suddenly. "Even if we fail, we'll drag the High Elves down with us into that abyss. A few hundred years later, our race will be able to accrue enough strength to climb back out of it, while the High Elves will be left lying in the mud hole."

It was true that the human race indeed had more latent potential for growth in comparison to the High Elves.

Link laughed at this and said, "Enough about this. Let's discuss the Ethereal Prince. Evelina, you said that he possesses Level-12 power and is especially proficient in spatial magic. Try to recall what other particularities he has."

Evelina held her forehead in her hand, deep in thought. A few minutes later, she shook her head. "I've only seen him twice. He's always so secretive. He also likes hiding himself in a corner."

"Then let's talk about his get-up," said Celine.

"Get-up? Let's see, he likes to wear a long grey robe. He also usually wears a grey hood over his head. He has a pair of silver gleaming eyes. Uhm, he also wears a bracelet, which is carved with a set of magic runes that I don't even recognize."

"Oh?" Link was now curious. He said, "Do you still remember what those magic runes look like?"

"Of course." Evelina took out her wand. With a few strokes, ten curious magic runes floated in the air.

Celine observed them and shook her head. "I don't understand any of these runes."

Eliard examined the runes intently. He then closed his eyes, ruminating on them. Ten seconds later, he shook his head. "Me neither."

Under Link's instruction, Eliard had seen much himself. Though not as proficient as Link, he had a rough knowledge of dragon runes, time runes, spatial runes and many other profound areas in the mystic arts. But he had never come across such runes in his studies.

All three of them looked at Link.

Link gazed at the runes, mesmerized. In truth, he was reading the game system's translation presented before him.

The runes floating in the air had nothing to do with magic. They were actually a series of words in the Ethereal language. The runes' translation read "Point 1852, master of the secret arts, Haromed the Third."

As soon as the translation appeared, the game system presented a new mission to him.

Mission Activated: Pursue the Intruder

Description: Search the Free Trade Confederation in the South, pinpoint the exact location of Haromed the Third.

Mission Reward 1: Omni Points +500

## Mission Reward 2: Moonstone

Link regarded the 500-Omni-Point reward with indifference, but when he saw the Moonstone reward, he immediately accepted the mission. However, a frown appeared on his face when he reread Haromed the Third's name.

He had known the fellow back in the game. His power was impressive, but the man was as timid as a mouse. He always shied away from danger and never stayed in one place for too long. His penchant for disguises made him as slippery as an eel. Even if Link knew that he was in Golle Kingdom, capturing Haromed would still be an extremely difficult hurdle to overcome.

# Chapter 543

## The Fire of War Has Been Lit

Moon Stone sounded pretty, but the only relationship between the type of stone and the moon was that both had the same soft, watery glow.

If a piece of Moon Stone was put on the ceiling of a pitch black room, it would emit light like a moon. It would be beautiful.

Of course, it wasn't just beautiful. It was actually an astral meteorite that could reach Level-19. However, it wasn't material for combat. Biologically, it wasn't that strong—not even as strong as a Level-11 meteorite. It was very difficult to force its power into the territory of combat.

Its biggest use was for filtering!

In addition to physical objects, it could also filter power, souls, and other semi-solid things.

Take power for example.

A person would be affected by their mixed bloodline, talent, emotions, and even their environment. There would be many impurities in their power too. Take Celine for example. No matter how her demonic power was sealed, her Secret Mana would still have a tinge of demonic aura.

It was very faint, and a regular Magician wouldn't be able to tell, but at Link's level, he could sense it.

Once he got the Moon Stone, he could help Celine filter her power. After many filtrations, only pure Secret Mana was left in her. In turn, that power would affect her body and repress the demonic bloodline further. It might even eradicate the demonic bloodline entirely.

Also, take Link for example.

He supposedly had Flawless Dragon Power, but he could feel that it wasn't that pure. Whenever he cast spells at an extreme speed, his spells would ripple uncontrollably. This showed that his power wasn't pure.

If he could filter out these small impurities, his spells would be even more perfect. It would be helpful for leveling up in the future too.

And this was only one of the Moon Stone's uses. It could also filter distracting thoughts, purify one's heart, and many more miraculous things. All in all, the stone's uses were endless!

After accepting the mission, Link said, "I don't know some of these runes, but since he always has the bracelet on, it must be useful. If we meet him, we'll just keep an eye on the bracelet's changes."

In reality, Link already knew the bracelet's use when he saw the name Haromed.

The word meant "Lord of the Secret Node." This meant that the bracelet was the ring of the secret node. Its use was to help Haromed make short-distance and dense teleportation trips.

It was a bit abstract. The detailed process was that in one second, Haromed could teleport more than 1000 times between predetermined spatial nodes with barely any energy loss. The result was that, to the naked eye, Haromed would be at multiple places at the same time. It was like an undefeatable division spell.

This spell was great for escaping and terrifying during combat. Haromed loved escaping, but that was because he was careful. If he really started fighting, his tactics were troublesome too.

If Link had come alone and met this guy, he would have a hard time while fighting. Unfortunately for Haromed, he had three friends with him. More importantly, Celine happened to have a prediction talent that could equal Haromed's trick.

No matter how tricky he was, Celine would know where he would appear next. If she shot, he would be done for. Because of this, Link didn't worry too much over the bracelet.

At that time, everyone had finished checking their equipment and was ready. "Link," Eliard said, "can we go now?"



Link nodded and turned to Celine. "Be careful on the road. Keep your small guns handy for defense."

He'd added Ethereal Power into the pair of guns called Link·Celine and Link made 20 Level-11 bullets.

"I know." Celine patted the two magic fireguns at her waist.

"Then let's go."

As soon as he finished, white light flashed. The four disappeared from the tavern. An instant later, they reappeared on the business avenue in the southern suburb of Port Antique.

They walked westward according to the map. After around 15 miles, there was a branch. They went left and reached a hill after ten miles. There was a small town in the hills called Glen Heights.

According to the scouts, this was where the Ethereal prince last appeared in.

Ethereal King Haromed was very sensitive to spatial magic. In order to not alert him, Link had set the transmission location to somewhere 12 miles away from Glen Heights.

After reaching the business avenue, they walked westward. Along the way, they ran into two groups of lower-level bandits from the Syndicate. They avoided the first and dealt with the second. After walking for two hours, they saw Glen Heights.

The town was basically built halfway up the hill. The buildings were all plain wooden cottages. From the distance, they could see people walking to and fro. It was actually quite lively. An open road spiraled up along the incline. They walked up at a steady pace like ordinary mercenaries.

Evelina was more familiar with the South. "There's a large jungle south of the hills," she introduced. "It contains rich resources while Glen Heights is built right at the edge. It's also close to the port. Merchants often buy medicinal herbs, fur, and other jungle products here."

"They must have a diverse population," Eliard said.

Evelina nodded. "Indeed. That's why foreigners don't attract much attention here. It's logical if Haromed appeared here."

Link chuckled. "But he's still a guest from another realm and slipped up."

The scout had reported that there was a merchant living in Glen Heights who liked to eat ants. The bigger and darker the ant was, the more he liked it. He would also buy it specifically from people. According to his servant, he had to fry the ants for him.

At first, the scout didn't feel anything strange. Everyone had their own weird habits. However, Link knew immediately that this was a high-status Ethereal Warrior after seeing this information.

In the game, ants were a delicacy for the Ethereal Warriors. Ants had some special nutrients that could relieve the pain caused by not fitting well with their host. The more powerful an Ethereal was, the more insufferable the pain was. A regular Ethereal could force himself through it, but high-level Ethereals had to eat ants to get rid of the pain. Otherwise, it would be more painful than death.

This would happen in the first half year after the Ethereals entered Firuman. Half a year later, someone discovered a way to relieve the pain, thus finally ending the strange habit of eating black ants.

Half an hour later, the four reached Glen Heights.

Link looked left and right. He found a farmer chopping firewood outside a secluded house by the roadside. "Hey, I want to ask something."

"I'm busy... ah, what would you like to know?" He immediately changed his tone after Link tossed him a silver coin.

"I heard there's a strange merchant who likes to eat black ants," Link said.

"Oh, you're talking about Mr. Goodall, right? Why are you looking for him?" the farmer asked offhandedly. At the same time, he applied force and split the firewood into two.

"See, us four, we're mercenaries. We heard that he's willing to pay a good price for ants and we found some really big ones." Link shook his bag.

"Oh, I see." The farmer pointed at a wooden building with a pointed roof in the heart

of the town. "See that? That's where Mr. Goodall lives. Just go there."

"Oh, thank you very much." Link nodded and turned to wave at his companions. The group walked "casually" over.

The wooden building was only a few hundred feet away. After some minutes, they were outside.

The building had a yard and was surrounded by high walls. The door was shut tightly; there was no sound inside at all. Link listened, and his expression changed. He walked to the door, placed a hand on it, and got ready to force it open. But just as he was about to apply force, he felt something and immediately snatched his hand back.

"There's a security spell. Go to the side." Link walked towards an alley on the side. Once he got there, he held onto Celine's shoulder. Using physical strength, he jumped and flipped over the ten-foot-high wall.

Eliard and Evelina all had strong bodies and jumped up too. Once inside the yard, they saw that it was filled with strange flowers and plants. There was also a big pot with bubbling liquid inside. Beside it was a small bag. The bag was half-open, revealing all the dead ants inside.

Getting an idea, Link walked over and sniffed the vapor of the pot. "This guy is trying to extract the fusion substance in the ants... He must have gone out but will return soon. Let's hide in the yard!"

The yard was more than 60 feet long and 30 feet wide. There was also much vegetation. The four could use the plants to cover themselves without any spells.

Link waited for the three to hide first. Then he started wiping away all of their traces. Finally, he hid too and waited for the Ethereal prince to appear.

The four waited patiently. After around two minutes, the door creaked, and someone pushed it open. Then two young men walked in.

One of them wore a gray-white robe and had no mask. He looked to be around 30 years old. The one beside him was a woman, but she'd covered herself well. She even covered her aura, not letting even a bit out. Her only characteristic was her height. She was half a head taller than most human women.

According to Evelina's descriptions, the one on the left was the Ethereal prince. Then who was the woman on the right?

Link glanced in confusion at Evelina who was hiding in another corner. What he saw shocked him. Evelina was shaking her head and saying silently, That's not the Ethereal prince. That woman is a High Elf.

# Chapter 544

## Ariel Newmoon

The man was not Haromed. To complicate things even further, there was a High Elf in their midst.

The former's presence was not too surprising. As Evelina had said before, Haromed was not the only high-level Ethereal. But the Ethereal and the High Elf before them seemed to be working together on something, and the High Elf had deliberately hidden her identity. This demanded further scrutiny.

After thinking for a while, Link mouthed noiselessly at Evelina, "Inspect them. Get ready to act."

As Link and Evelina were the Legendary masters of their four-man squad, they acted as its vanguard. Eliard and Celine served as their backup, providing their assistance whenever they saw fit.

Their targets did not notice the four of them lying in ambush in their yard. They chatted on while walking side by side.

"Envoy, are you sure this method of yours will be more effective?" asked the Ethereal Warrior. He was holding a crystal vial. It contained a light purple fluid.

"Of course it is. There's nothing unusual about your current conditions. It's simply due to the incompatibility between your souls and your new host bodies. Black ant essence can help alleviate your symptoms, but this is only a temporary solution. An antidote concocted with purple lotus extract should be able to completely cure your conditions," explained the High Elf woman. Her voice was hoarse. She sounded like a middle-aged man whose throat had suffered a terrible injury. Obviously, she, or he, was wearing a disguise.

The Ethereal Warrior still seemed unsure. He turned the vial around in his hand. After observing its contents from all possible angles for a few minutes, he finally said, "The decision isn't really mine to make. We'd best wait for my master to return. However, I do approve of some of the demands you've made in exchange for your remedy."

"I see. And when will your master return?" asked the High Elf.

"Not today, that's for sure. The earliest he'll be back is tomorrow afternoon. And if I'm being honest, your demands may sound a bit excessive to him. I would be more than happy to help you out a bit if it was up to me. But my master would probably not take kindly to the requests that you've made. He may even chase you out of here without a moment's hesitation. If it comes to that, you'll probably not be able to get anything from him."

As he spoke, the Ethereal put away the purple fluid and walked to the bubbling cauldron in the middle of the yard. He knelt down to add more firewood beneath the cauldron. He then began stirring the potion inside the cauldron with a stirring rod. As he stirred, the Ethereal sprinkled in the black ant carcasses into the mixture, leaving the High Elf woman standing in a corner.

The High Elf looked on at this, deep in thought. Ten seconds later, she opened her mouth to speak. "Then how many Stabilizing Crystals will you give me?"

"Hehe." The Ethereal chuckled. He brushed the dirt off his hands and said, "You give me the recipe for this purple lotus concoction and its preparation method, and I'll give you 300 pieces every month. That's around 22 pounds of Stabilizing Crystals."

"22 pounds... That's too little." The High Elf was not satisfied by this offer.

The Ethereal shook his head. "This is as much as I can give you. If I give you any more than that, our affair here will be revealed, and I will of course be severely punished by my master. But my punishment would also hurt you as much, since you won't be able to get a single piece of crystal from me then."

The High Elf fell silent for a while. Finally, she nodded. "Alright, I'll take it. 300 Stabilizing Crystals per month. Let's move on to the second item in our agenda. We've found that you Ethereals had a run-in with Ferde a while back. Since then, the number of Legendary masters in Ferde has increased. I would like to know the reason behind this."

As she said this, a drastic change came over the Ethereal's face. His brows shot up in anger. Power flowed off him in waves, sending out faint ripples in the air around him.

The Ethereal's demeanor switched instantly from the vulgar mannerisms of a haggling merchant to the ferocity of a wild beast.

He stood up and walked slowly towards the High Elf. His voice was dripping with hatred when he said, "Step away from this while you can, or else. Just wait and see. We'll get our revenge on Ferde. We'll raze that place to the ground, turn it into rubble!"

The High Elf woman was again silent. She seemed unmoved by the Ethereal Warrior's threat, but she did not ask any further. A while later, she took out a magic book with a purple cover and handed it over to the Ethereal. "If you don't wish to tell me, that's alright. This contains detailed instructions for preparing the purple lotus potion. Take it, and remember, 22 pounds of Stabilizing Crystals per month. No less than that, or we'll cut off our supply of purple lotuses."

"Got it. You seem like a reasonable person," replied the Ethereal moodily. He was still fuming.

At this point, the two of them had come to an agreement. As the High Elf turned to leave, Link, who had been hiding behind a clump of grass in the yard, shouted an order to Evelina, "Now!"

He leaped into action at the same time.

Link willed his Dragon King's Fury sword to point at the cauldron in the yard. A white spatial ball flew out from it. It then struck the cauldron in an explosion.

It was an upgraded version of the Spatial Shackle spell: Spatial Seal.

A resonant hum sounded. A white mist spread out in all directions. In an instant, the Ethereal was enveloped in it and was turned into a spatial statue. Deprived of all movement, the Ethereal was about to fall to the ground when suddenly, something happened.

As the mist surged towards the High Elf, a dark green light radiated from her body.

The light cloaked her body in an instant, blocking off the white mist. Upon a closer look, Link realized that the barrier of light did not completely block it off, but was rather slowing down its advance.

Taking advantage of this, the High Elf's body dissolved into mist itself. In the blink of an eye, she was able to retreat back a few feet away from the white mist. Once she was out of harm's way, the dark green light around her dissipated immediately.

When the light faded away, dark green leaves appeared out of thin air, swirling at high speed around the High Elf like a cyclone. The leaves lashed out in all directions, hitting everything in their paths, including the frozen Ethereal.

The High Elf had whipped up a terrifying leaf cyclone.

Whoosh... The leaves slashed across the Ethereal's body, tearing it into pieces. Nothing was safe from the High Elf woman's fury now. Not even her deal with the Ethereal was enough to guarantee the Ethereal's safety.

Before long, the cyclone ripped through Link's spatial white mist and was now heading towards Link and the others. It was spinning with such destructive momentum that everything in its path was ground to dust.

Link gazed intently at the High Elf woman. It turned out that she was also a Legendary master with a frightful temper. She had seemed composed back then, but once provoked, her wrath now threatened to swallow up the whole world like a raging torrent.

In spite of its ferocity, the leaf cyclone's power was only at Level-10. It was able to pierce through the white mist only because Link was not using his full power against her.

Link did not feel at all threatened by such an attack.

With a force of his will, a band of spatial runes surrounded the leaf cyclone. The runes then formed a thick spatial barrier around it. With a thunderous sound, the cyclone was shut within the barrier.

Bang, bang, bang! The dark green leaves of the cyclone rattled against the rune barrier repeatedly. A moment later, the cyclone faded into a dark green mist.

The dark green leaves were reduced to pieces through repeated collisions against the barrier. Before long, the leaves dissolved back into pure Nature Power. The dark green mist within the barrier was so thick that no one could see what was going on inside.

This went on for half a second. Suddenly, Link sensed a gap in the dark green swirl, as if there was something missing in it.

The sensation was akin to missing one's step while walking as if the ground had



disappeared beneath his foot. In much the same way, his spatial barrier felt as if it had lost its support from within.

A thought surfaced in his mind. She escaped. That certainly took some resolve!

The dark green mist behind the barrier began to subside just as soon as the thought popped up in his head. Two seconds later, the mist had completely disappeared, revealing a yard that had been ravaged by some force of nature. The grass and flowers had been completely pulverized. All that was left in the yard were deep pits and cavities in the thoroughly loosened soil.

Link dispelled the spatial barrier. Celine and the others came out of their hiding spots. They looked in utter amazement at the ground beneath them, which still sizzled with thick Nature Power aura.

It all happened so fast, not even Evelina was able to join in the fight. In the blink of an eye, the whole thing was over.

"Evie, do you know her?" Eliard looked at Evelina. None of them had anticipated such ferocious power from the High Elf woman, not even Link. In the end, she managed to escape from them.

Evelina was still dazed by the scene before her. Upon hearing Eliard speak, her body trembled a bit. She frowned. "Of course I do."

She looked at Link and said, "Do you remember when I told you that the High Elves now have five newly promoted Legendary masters?"

"Of course. Including you, that makes five. We've already seen the other three who went by the names of Elován, Sonya and Milose."

Evelina sighed. "That was the last Legendary master of the High Elves. She's called Ariel Newmoon. She was the first to reach Level-10. She's younger than me by three years, but she was able to reach Legendary half a month earlier before I did. Elován and the others were all High Elf geniuses, but I'm not too worried about them, since I know where their limitations lie. Ariel, however, is a different story. Honestly, I don't think I would be able to defeat her myself."

Ariel?

Link narrowed his eyes, visibly troubled by this.

The High Elf known as Ariel had appeared in the middle to later stages of the game. She was also a High Elf princess. Her High Elf blood was as pure as Milda's. The only difference was that she was younger than Milda by five years.

In the game, when she first appeared, Ariel was only a captain of a High Elf outpost. After receiving a few promotions in the span of three years, she finally became a general of the whole High Elf army, second only to Milda.

Ariel was the main mission in the later stages of the game. She had many interactions with the players during her mission. She was also portrayed frequently in the game's battle cut scenes.

She would calmly enter a fight and come out victorious without a spot of blood or dirt on her every time. She was also not programmed to deliver lines like "I'm tired, let's rest for a bit," as if she was driven by a perpetual source of power from within.

On the other hand, though Marshal Milda of the High Elf magical army had a glowing list of military achievements, she always came out worse for wear after every battle.

A few players who had too much time in their hands had made a comparison of the battles of every renowned Magician, followed by an evaluation of their respective power levels and combat prowesses.

They finally came to the conclusion that Eliard, the half-elf, and Ariel ranked at number one in terms of combat prowess. However, Eliard was a high-profile Magician, which earned him the attention of opponents with equal repute. As a result, his achievements were much more impressive. As for Milda, her combat power was only half of Ariel's.

Putting it simply, this High Elf princess was a genius among geniuses in the art of combat!

Ariel had even managed to make Evelina lose her nerve through their daily interactions back on the Isle of Dawn.

Link's head was throbbing slightly. He asked, "She's probably gone back to the Isle of Dawn by now. Evelina, do you think she'll give up her end of the bargain with the Ethereals?"

Evelina shook her head. "It doesn't seem likely. She's someone who won't let something go until she's seen it through. She always gets what she wants, as if Lady Luck's watching over her all the time."

Link's headache worsened. They were still nowhere near to finding the Ethereal prince, and now, they had to deal with such a troublesome individual.

Slapping his forehead, he finally calmed himself down. "I guess there's no point in crying over spilled milk. Haromed, the Ethereal prince, will return tomorrow afternoon. We'll just have to wait for him here."

# Chapter 545

## A Big Sewing Needle

Glen Heights

A day passed quickly. The next morning, the people of Glen Heights woke up as usual. They started up their stoves to make breakfast. Soon, plumes of smoke mixed with the white fog of the mountain air.

Woof, woof! Some dogs barked from town entrance, meaning that strangers had entered again. But the barking quickly died down, which meant that the strangers were ordinary. There wasn't anything abnormal on the surface.

This seemed to be the case.

At the entrance, an ox-driven cart carried seven or eight foreigners into Glen Heights. There were both men and women with worn clothing and tired faces. They also had some very crude metal weapons at their waists.

This type of group was extremely common in Glen Heights. They were mercenaries who wanted to change their lives. They would enter the southern jungle to try their luck at collecting valuable goods like rare and pretty birds, valuable herbs, furs, and more.

On average, 30 in every 100 mercenaries would die in the jungle. Of the other 70, more than 60 would only make enough to survive. The remaining few would earn much more in comparison. There would also be one lucky guy who could make a fortune.

These mercenaries were dressed poorly. The people and dogs of the village were used to people like them and didn't even spare them an extra glance.

After entering Glen Heights, the mercenaries got off the cart. They would usually find somewhere in the village to rest, eat a meal, and enter the forest after refreshing themselves.

There was a woman amongst this group; she looked to be around 30 years old. Her

features were plain, her body was fat, and her greasy long hair was piled carelessly on her head. She held two axes and wore ragged leather armor. She joked around with the mercenaries, vulgar words streaming out of her mouth.

The woman walked with the mercenaries down the road. When she passed a small building, she glanced over casually and then continued walking.

Everything looked normal.

The small building they'd passed by had a large yard. This was where Ethereal Prince Haromed hid. Link's group was observing the mercenaries in the yard.

"This is the third group of mercenaries this morning," Link whispered. "Evelina, do you think that woman looks like Ariel?"

Evelina shook her head without thinking. "No way. Ariel is a noble elfin princess. She would never make herself look that ugly. Look at her hair. It looks as disgusting as a piece of turd."

Celine shook her head too. "I don't think so either. She's probably just a regular mercenary."

"Should we test her?" Eliard asked.

As soon as he finished, Evelina pointed at the female mercenary and uttered, "Go!"

A thumb-sized pebble flew up from the ground and whooshed toward the back of the woman's head. It was as fast as lightning. If the woman was hit, her head would explode, and she would die.

Half a second later, the pebble had crossed 1000 feet and was at the mercenary's head, but she was still clueless. She was joking with a man beside her and even reached out to hit him. The man laughed and jumped to the side with a sleazy expression.

In the last instant, Evelina stopped the pebble. By that time, it almost touched the woman's hair. Without the power's support, the pebble dropped the ground. Hearing the sound, the woman finally realized something. She turned around in confusion. Seeing that nothing was wrong, she hurried to catch up with her friends.

"A regular person," Evelina said.

During this entire process, Link didn't see any sign of pretense either. The woman had acted naturally. She was just a low-class female mercenary.

"Indeed," Link replied a bit belatedly. He wasn't suspecting the woman. He just felt that something was wrong, but when he thought carefully, he couldn't pinpoint it.

After thinking some more, he could only say, "Alright, no need to keep looking. Ariel has most likely already gotten here. We just can't find her right now... No need to purposely look for her. Let's just be prepared."

Ariel was at Level-10 while Link was Level-11. He had the upper hand in terms of power. Paired with Evelina's help, if they were prepared enough, Ariel wouldn't be able to change things even if she tried.

The four nodded and returned to the wooden building.

There was a very wide basement in this building with a long-distance portal seal. Link believed that Haromed would most likely come out of that.

Before, they wanted to keep Haromed from escaping, so they only had to guard against a one-sided attack. Now, they also had to guard against Ariel's sneak attacks from the outside. Thus, they had to add a powerful outer defensive spell too.

They got to work immediately.

In the basement, Link was responsible for the core construction. Evelina took care of the refinement while Eliard assisted, learning as he went. Celine was in charge of surveillance outside.

The three Magicians worked together and progressed quickly. Within two hours, they added a sturdy spatial defensive seal outside the imprisonment seal outside the portal seal.

Once this seal started running, it could block all attacks from spells under Level-12. With this insurance, they shouldn't have to worry about Ariel. Despite this, Link's anxiousness still wasn't reduced. This time, he didn't express it, but he kept his guard up.

After the seal was completed, everyone became free. They rested alone in the building, replenishing their energy. After around three hours, Link's eyes flew open.

"Get ready! He's coming!" He could feel the space vibrating in the basement. The ground shook as well, with soft creaks. This was a sign of a long-distance spatial seal operating.

Everyone was shocked.

"Evelina, activate the spatial imprisonment seal when he appears."

"Got it."

"Eliard, get a good position. If anything happens, activate this runestone for an energy flood and kill him!"

This rune took a lot of work and resources. It was the product of many Ferde Magicians working together. There was only one currently. It could activate a Level-13 energy flood for emergencies.

"I understand." Eliard took the runestone and stood in the predetermined spot.

"Celine, stand here. When the magic seal is activated, a strong shield will appear around you. The magic waves that appear after that might disturb your vision, but you must hold tight. Wait until the shield stabilizes before shooting. You must hit the Ethereal prince!"

"Don't worry. Leave it to me!" Celine's expression was serious. Grasping the big fire gun, she stood in her spot. Link had specifically modified the space here. She could see others, but others couldn't see her. It was the safest place in the entire building.

They'd all practiced this many times before and they got into position within half a second now.

The spatial waves in the basement strengthened. Link didn't do anything in order to not alert Haromed. As soon as the man appeared, Link would make a fatal attack to his physical body!

Link also took out the Ethereal-catching weapon.

Nothing unexpected had happened up to now. After two seconds, there was a flash of silver-white light above the magic seal in the basement. It expanded to around five feet wide, turning into a door.

They could see the scenery on the other side through the door. It seemed to be a big black castle. Link was shocked at this; he recognized it. It was Shadow Walker Morpheus' hideout—the Palace of Darkness.

The door remained for half a second, and a person walked out.

This guy was dressed in a gray-white robe and hood. His entire body was covered. As soon as he appeared, Evelina mouthed to Link, "It's him."

This was Haromed, the Ethereal prince.

The moment he walked out, a message flashed past Link's vision. He'd completed the mission of finding the Ethereal prince and received a Moon Stone.

Another mission appeared at the same time. He stole a glance and saw that it was to kill the Ethereal prince. He immediately accepted it.

On the other hand, Evelina had acted without hesitation. Her Dragon Power rushed into the magic seal. Countless magical runes overlapped under her foot and illuminated, spreading. Within one-hundredth of a second, the entire space was filled with runes.

They were like anchors that nailed the space down. Affected by the spell, the door behind the Ethereal prince flashed and went out like a candle in the wind. It abandoned Haromed in the death trap Link's group had set for him.

At the same time, a Level-12 spatial barrier over three feet thick shot up outside the imprisonment seal. It blocked everything that happened inside this building.

Up to this point, everything had gone smoothly according to plan. But for some reason, the unrest in Link's heart strengthened. It practically hindered him from casting spells normally. He couldn't attack the Ethereal prince under this situation, so he walked to Celine's side for protection.

Almost simultaneously, he saw a dark green wooden sword gradually appear in the air behind Celine. It was so secretive and subtle, hiding all murderous intent. It was like a shadow hunter hidden in the sea of space.

The sword's appearance was very unique. Its body was dark green and so thin it looked like a large sewing needle. If tossed onto the street, people would think it was



a thin rusted rod.

Seeing this, Link's heart jumped. Oh no, it's a World Impaler!

# Chapter 546

## It Was Just Impossible

The World Impaler was the highest pinnacle of High Elf magical worksmanship. It was made from the oldest branches of the World Tree.

This sword had two particularities that defied conventional understanding. Firstly, it could pierce through anything that existed in Firuman. Be it ethereal or physical, it could pierce through anything. Even space was not immune to it. It would be able to kill anyone you wanted dead if supplied with enough Legendary-level power.

There had been historical accounts of High Elves wielding the World Impaler with all their power to strike down their enemies 50 miles away.

Secondly, the sword was incredibly fast.

Due to its unimaginable speed, it was usually used in ambushes. A competent enough wielder of the sword would be able to strike their victim's vital points, ending them on the spot before they even realized what had happened.

A High Elf poet once wrote a poem in praise of the sword: "Swifter than time, it was the God of Light's divine retribution, the herald of the end of days!"

In fact, this sword was also known as one of the strategic-level weapons forged by the High Elves, a national treasure of the Isle of Dawn. It rarely saw any use, and still, Link never imagined that he would see it so soon in Ariel's hands.

The sword's target was Celine. If Link was not standing beside her, Celine would surely have been dead!

Link realized what his opponent was aiming for. If something happened to Celine, Link would lose his composure. Taking advantage of this, the Ethereal Prince Haromed would be able to turn the tables on them. At that point, Link's squad would be decimated.

He was now seething with anger, but still his mind did not stray. On the contrary, an

extreme calmness had cleared his mind. His mind was now working at twice its usual speed. He had now entered his Ultimate State.

Before his eyes, the world around him had slowed down so much that everything seemed to have come to a complete halt.

Under these circumstances, Link's Dragon Power flared up. In a thousandth of a second, he had spent 1000 Dragon Power points. A portion of this Dragon Power was used to maintain Link's current accelerated speed of thought, while another portion was used to repair the damage that was spreading across his body while he was in his Ultimate State.

The only thing that was still moving in this standstill was the World Impaler, ripping through the air like a sewing needle.

In an instant, the sword inched closer towards Celine's back. It was simply too fast. Celine had realized that something was wrong. Her body moved, instinctively trying to dodge the fatal blow coming from behind, but Celine's speed was nothing in comparison to the World Impaler's.

She then saw Link and stopped, ignoring the threat behind her. She turned and fired a shot from her magic rifle at Haromed the Ethereal Prince.

Bang! A streak of red light extended out from the rifle's barrel towards the Ethereal Prince's head.

At the same time, Link drew out his Dragon King's Fury sword. The sound of wind and lightning erupted from it. With Dragon Power blazing fierily from its blade, Link swung the sword in an arc at the World Impaler.

The World Impaler's wielder seemed to be unaware of the sword's current state, as it pressed on forward without dodging or parrying Link's attack.

An instant later, there was deafening clang. Link's sword collided against the World Impaler, sending out an explosion of energy.

While the Dragon King's Fury sword did not stand on equal ground with the World Impaler in terms of quality, it did not collide head-on with the World Impaler and was able to come out relatively unharmed. On the other hand, the World Impaler's wielder was not as powerful as Link. Under such circumstances, the result was a stalemate.

When the two swords rebounded from each other, the bullet from Celine's magic rifle had flown nine feet through the air. It was still another nine feet away from the Ethereal Prince.

Link managed to match the World Impaler's incredible speed at that moment.

When the explosion of energy occurred, Link had a hand pressed gently against Celine's back. A spatial barrier appeared behind Celine, shielding her from the shockwave.

Its attack impeded by Link, the World Impaler retreated immediately from him, as if trying to regain its momentum and strike a second time when it was ready.

I'm not letting you go! Focusing his will on the Dragon King's Fury sword, Link sent it flying out. Stacks of runes appeared on the blade, and the Dragon King's Fury sword pursued the World Impaler.

Link activated four Despair Balls which appeared in the air 50 feet from each other. After zipping in and out of the magic spheres, the Dragon King's Fury sword finally appeared about 100 feet away from Link.

At that moment, Link sensed that the World Impaler had stopped moving. He took it to mean that it had returned to its owner.

He quickly estimated his opponent's position and sent his sword hurtling towards where she would most likely appear in the next second.

An instant later, Link felt that the sword had pierced something. Judging from its impact, it was probably flesh that the sword had struck. But the sensation only lasted for a moment. Link felt the sword budge slightly, and the resistance to the sword's tip was gone.

Link summoned his sword back. He saw fresh blood stains on the sword's tip. With another nudge of his will, he activated a simple Magician's Hand. The blood stain floated up from the blade and was then stored away by Link in his spatial pendant.

In the field of Secret Magic, blood was purported to be the soul's vessel. Through even a drop of blood, Secret Magicians could easily track down its owner.

Link was not too familiar with this branch of magic. However, Eleanor, Evelina, Vance,

Elin, and the others had accomplished much in this field. Tracking their enemy with a drop of blood should not be a problem to them.

When Link was done, he immediately came out of his Ultimate State. Though he had only been in it for five-thousandths of a second, he had already spent 5000 Dragon Power points. An indescribable pain now gripped his head. He was also rendered incapable of casting any spells for a short period of time.

The world around him now returned to its normal speed.

A short while later, Celine's bullet had reached the side Haromed's head.

Haromed had just come out from the spatial door. Before he could even react, Haromed was already surrounded by his aggressors in an instant. He panicked and instinctively activated his trump card: Polyclone.

Polyclone.

### Level-12 Ethereal Spell

Description: With its affinity for spatial magic, an Ethereal is able to easily feel its way through spatial nodes. Through these nodes, Ethereals can bypass the limitations of most spatial spells.

(Note: The secret art of using these spatial nodes is difficult to master. Not even the Ethereal Prince has a complete mastery of it.)

There was a sudden flash from the bracelet on the Ethereal Prince's wrist. In a flash, his body was split into three. The three clones were ten feet apart and were identical to one another. What boggled everyone's mind at that moment was the fact that Celine's bullet passed harmlessly through one of the Ethereal Prince's foreheads.

Seeing this, Eliard activated his own trump card without a second thought. The runestone in his hand shone brightly as he began infusing his power into it.

A brilliant red streak of light flashed out towards one of the Ethereal Prince's clones.

Before letting out his attack, Eliard adjusted the streak of light's trajectory beforehand so that it would hit the other two clones.

A Level-13 attack was a force to be reckoned with. Ripples spread out from where the beam of light had passed through. The ripples were caused by the surrounding air that had been heated up, though some of them were also due to the slight spatial turbulences in the attack's trajectory.

Once a Spatial Magician's power reached a certain stage, any of his or her attacks could visibly affect the integrity of the surrounding spatial fabric itself.

When this beam of light sprang forth, Eliard had already thought of a follow-up attack. If my attack passes through the first two clones, that means the last one should be the Ethereal's real body. Celine will just need to open fire another time at it, and the Ethereal Prince will be as good as dead.

The beam of light had served its purpose. It passed straight through the first two clones, which shimmered for a moment and then disappeared. Only one Ethereal clone remained in the room.

Celine did not disappoint Eliard. She saw the last Ethereal clone and fired a shot at it.

Ever since she had received her magic rifle, Celine had been training hard every day, especially during her time in the Girvent war. She had spent thousands of bullets during her training. As of now, Celine's focus and precision were second to none.

She remained unfazed by her first shot that hit nothing. When Eliard's attack isolated the last Ethereal clone, she had a sudden premonition. Acting immediately on it, she pulled the trigger.

When the beam of light headed straight for him, Haromed began to panic. At the sight of Celine's barrel aimed squarely at his real body, he instinctively activated his Polyclone technique another time.

In that instant, his body split again into three more clones.

He had thought of making a run for the cellar's exit, but the spatial imprisonment around him was way too secure. He was still able to use his Polyclone technique, but his power was sealed up effectively by the spatial imprisonment.

Under his current circumstances, the Ethereal Prince could not find any spatial node around him that would be able to facilitate his escape. He could only conjure up more clones of himself to evade his aggressors' attacks.

Just then, instead of escaping, Haromed decided to retaliate.

But then, tragedy struck!

Just when one of his clones appeared, and his real body was trying to squeeze itself through a spatial node, he suddenly had a sense of extreme danger. What's going on? What's going on!

His body shook all of a sudden when he reappeared in another corner. He lowered his eyes and saw that there was a huge bloody hole in his chest. He turned around and saw that the barrel of Celine's magic rifle was still glowing.

"I've been hit? How did she know where my real body was? How is this possible?"

In a second, he had produced 1000 clones of himself, each as real as the other. He did not understand how the woman was able to see through his cloning trick, which was, as far as he knew, faultless.

It was just impossible.

# Chapter 547

## Battle Invitation at the Cliff

### Basement

There was a basin-sized hole in the Ethereal prince's chest. His body was almost split into two. With this kind of injury, he still wasn't dead and was even still conscious.

This was because the body didn't belong to him. He was just possessing it. As long as the head wasn't damaged, he could still escape.

Different from regular Ethereals, Prince Harmod's soul was abnormally strong. Seeing that he was in a hopeless state, his eyes shone with silver light, and he roared. "Ah!"

Ping! With a crisp sound, his bracelet shattered into a burst of light. The white light flowed into Haromed's head. After that, the air around him blurred. A beam buried into it and his eyes dimmed. His body collapsed onto the ground with a thud, losing all presence of strength.

This time, Haromed had risked everything to escape. The entire process happened in the blink of the eye. The four couldn't even process it.

Link could have stopped Haromed, but he'd just retreated from the state of extreme spellcasting. His mind hadn't recovered fully and was still delayed. By the time he recovered, Haromed had already disappeared.

Link shook his still-hurting pain and jumped into the magic seal. He cast a spatial detection spell.

White light appeared and spun around in the air. After around three seconds, fine ripples emerged in the light. They formed a tunnel the size of an arm and forcefully broke through Evelina's spatial imprisonment, extending outward.

No, Haromed shouldn't be able to break free. However, the World Impaler had put an opening to the spatial imprisonment. Haromed used it to flee.



Other than the spatial tunnel, Link also clearly smelled a faint aura in the air. It was like incense from earth. It was very faint, but after smelling it, he felt a bit dizzy. His emotions became affected too.

Link was very familiar with this smell. It appeared when a soul shattered. In other words, this was a soul's "blood."

"Haromed broke free from the restraints, but he's hurt," Link said immediately. "He can't be far. Let's go."

Using the traces shown by the spatial detection, Link rushed out of the yard. The other three ran out of their hiding places, following Link closely.

Link raised a hand while on the road. The light of a detection spell wrapped around his finger. He tested for abnormal waves on the path and pursued Haromed.

Soon, the four left Glen Heights and entered the dense jungle to the west.

Many of the trees here towered in the air. Their rich treetops practically blocked all source of light. Even though it was daytime, the jungle was dark. Plants that liked the shade, such as bushes and vines, took up almost all the space under the trees.

After entering here, they slowed down drastically, especially Link. His body had mostly recovered, thanks to the Dragon Power, but he was still very careful.

"Stay close and don't get separated," he murmured. "I can feel that Ariel hasn't left. She's still looking for a chance."

He still felt uneasy, like someone had their eyes on him. Not many in Firuman could give Link such pressure. At the moment, Ariel was the only one.

Just like them, Ariel hadn't given up yet. She was still trying.

This High Elf genius was truly hard to get rid of.

Evelina was a bit nervous. "Link, you have to be careful," she warned quietly. "She has never failed in her entire life, and she even brought a World Impaler this time. She's too scary."

Celine wasn't happy at this. Eyeing Evelina, she said, "I think you're just scared. She

fought with Link and got hurt."

Eveline shook her head. "That was a tie, at most. Link isn't well off now either."

She had seen more clearly than Celine and wasn't that familiar with Link. She didn't have the absolute trust that Celine had.

Eliard was worried too. He turned to Link and arched an eyebrow while gesturing with his hands. How confident are you?

Link replied, gesturing, At most, we fail at catching Haromed.

This comforted Eliard. Chuckling, he asked, "What is there to be scared of? If that Ariel really is so powerful, why doesn't she just come out and fight? I think she's scared of us, heh."

Link thought a bit and said, "Let's go. In a battle, the end is decided in an instant. Stop thinking nonsense."

So the group stopped talking and continued following Link into the forest. They walked like this for more than one hour. They traveled around five miles and reached deep into the forest.

Here, Link's eyebrow twitched. "The spatial mark is gone."

With that, he squatted to check carefully. The ground was covered in rotting branches and leaves. Occasionally, some insects would crawl over. It all looked normal.

After a few minutes, Link found a fist-sized claw mark on the roots of a tree.

Evelina walked over to look. "This is the paw print of a Blue Mongoose, but it looks weird. The Blue Mongoose is supposed to be very agile. Judging from the footprint, it's matured, so why did it leave such an unsteady paw print?"

"Maybe because it isn't familiar with the body," Eliard said.

Link nodded and said, "The Ethereal must have possessed this Blue Mongoose. It'll be easier to find."

At the side, Evelina cast a beast tracking spell. A red-green spotlight rushed out of her

wand. It circled the paw print and then flew away. The group followed it.

After a dozen miles, the tracking light suddenly stopped in place. It circled the spot and then disappeared.

Evelina was shocked. "His aura disappeared completely."

The injured soul of an Ethereal used his own power to forcefully possess a mongoose in the dense forest. All signs on the road pointed to the fact that he couldn't control the mongoose perfectly, leaving behind many traces to follow. But now, it seemed to have evaporated.

There was only one conclusion.

"Someone powerful intercepted," Eliard said. "Maybe it's Ariel?"

Celine was already holding her guns. "For some reason, I feel like it'll become very dangerous if we keep pursuing... Link, what do we do?"

Link didn't reply. He circled the place where the mongoose had disappeared, searching closely while casting different detection spells. Three minutes later, he found a tiny mark in the vines that extended from a tree.

Someone had made it with one's hand. Judging from the size, it was a woman. Link looked at Evelina. "How is Ariel at martial combat?"

In the game, Ariel didn't display any of those skills, so Link overlooked it. But after fighting her across space, he realized that she wasn't so simple.

Evelina shook her head. "I'm not sure, but one year ago, I think she purposely went to learn from a wandering vigilante called Green Leaf Swordsman. He's apparently amazing at swordsmanship. Later, I saw her practice a few times. She seems good."

Eliard found this strange. "A Magician practicing swordsmanship? That's weird. I heard that Elven Natural magic isn't suitable for martial arts."

Here, Eliard got an idea. His Sunlight Power was very suitable for martial arts. In combat, it was sometimes more useful than spells. It seemed that he should find some time to learn swordsmanship.

Evelina nodded. "Indeed, which is why I'm confused why she did that. However, Natural magic has a great advantage in controlling plants. There aren't many clues here. It's highly possible that Ariel did this."

Link didn't think so. If a Magician really wanted to learn martial arts, there were so many tricks they could use. To a Magician, there were only things that they couldn't imagine. Nothing was impossible.

He already saw Ariel as a martial arts expert now and would treat her accordingly.

Thinking of this, he said, "Let's go. She still left some signs. She used this vine to swing over and dropped onto a branch 60 feet away... Look, there's her footprint. Then she used another vine to leave. That's why there aren't any marks on the ground. As for the mongoose, she must've taken it."

The four of them were the top representatives of Ferde. It would be embarrassing if their plan was ruined by one person. Ariel didn't know how to give up, but Link was like this too.

Only those with this personality could keep moving forward on the tumultuous path of power and make shocking achievements.

Celine and Eliard didn't have any objections. Evelina couldn't do anything either. She didn't dare leave the forest alone, so she had to go with the flow.

The four continued pursuing. After around half an hour, a cliff appeared before them with plumes of white smoke under it. It was a few hundred feet high.

An ordinary female High Elf stood at the edge quietly. Her features didn't stand out, but her aura was indescribable, especially her dark purple eyes. When she looked at them, everyone—including Link—felt ineffable pressure.

Right now, she had a Blue Mongoose the size of a cat in her arms.

She saw Link from afar and turned around, smiling thinly. "I knew you'd come. This cat is nice, but his life is in my hands. I can destroy him at any time."

Link raised a hand, stopping the group. He stopped at a distance too. "What are your terms?"

"You and I have a battle at this cliff. No one else can help. The winner can take this cat. As for the loser, whether they can live is up to their skills. What do you think?" Ariel's words were shocking.

# Chapter 548

## Only One Rule in This World

Ariel was the first to be on top of the cliff. It was her domain. Even if she had not set any traps beforehand around the place, she knew the cliff's geography like the back of her hand.

And now, she threatened the Ethereal Prince's life. Link naturally had his reservations about a duel with her, and defeat was almost inevitable to those who hesitated even for a second in a fight.

Ariel clearly had the upper hand.

Eliard muttered, "Link, she's definitely up to something. You can't agree to this!"

Celine added, "This seems dangerous."

Evelina stepped forward and said to Ariel, "Winnie, does it really have to come to this? We only want the Ethereal Prince himself."

Ariel laughed mirthlessly and shook her head. "Evie, you just don't get it."

She did not say anything about Evelina being a traitor to her own race. She then turned to Link. "The way I see it, most of the Magicians nowadays do not really understand the true essence of magic. These people are just puppets whose strings are still being pulled by the phantoms of history. They continue to walk on the path that their predecessors had set for them, and never do they once dare stray from it. These people are not fit to be called Magicians."

Link stood motionless. He did not speak a word. As Ariel spoke to him, he was quietly observing the state of the cliff. He could not find any traps laid out for him. Ariel must have simply wanted a one-on-one duel with him.

Ariel did not mind him scoping the cliff out. She continued, "Those who truly deserve to be called Magicians are few and far between, and incidentally, you are someone whom I had acknowledged as a true Magician. I've always wanted to test my skills

against yours, but there had never been an opportunity to do so. At least, not until this very moment!"

While saying this, Ariel threw the Blue Mongoose into the air. Like a flash of lightning, the World Impaler in her hand pierced through the mongoose's head.

The mongoose screeched in pain. Thick green smoke issued out of its nose and mouth. Haromed, the Ethereal Prince, was dead.

Ariel had just casually threw away her trump card, and Link and his party had come all this way for nothing.

"Have you gone mad?" asked Evelina, shocked.

Eliard was shocked as well. However, he somewhat understood what drove Ariel. Link was similar to her in some respects, especially his disregard for everything else in his single-minded pursuit of magical wisdom.

Celine did not say a word. She continued to look at Link, waiting for him to decide.

Link had been holding the Dragon King's Fury sword in his hand. His eyes fell on the mongoose's carcass, a look of disappointment on his face. He had intended to use the Level-12 Ethereal Crystal made from the Ethereal Prince's essence to construct a high-level defensive spell for Ferde, but now, everything had gone up in smoke.

Link then looked up at Ariel. Her face was calm, but her purple eyes burned with a fiery desire to duel with Link.

Link recalled what Ariel was like in the previous game world.

The High Elf princess had a pure passion for combat. She was always first to confront the biggest and meanest demons in the forefront. She had massacred more than 20 chief-level demons, including a Level-18 Fallen Angel.

In the final battle against Lord of the Deep, Nozama, the one who had injured Nozama so severely that he was forced to pull back the Magicians of the demon fortress was also none other than Ariel herself.

Throughout the allied forces, the only one who could match her combat power was Eliard in the late-game stages.

But right now, Eliard only had Level-9 Sunlight Power, while his opponent had already reached the Legendary realm before him. Obviously, Eliard was nowhere near Ariel's level.

It would have been better to have a combat genius like Ariel as an ally. But she was their enemy right now, and one Link had any qualms about killing right away.

And right now, that same enemy had given him the chance to do so.

He took a step forward and said in a low voice. "Ariel Newmoon, do you really think I would take you on one-on-one? Your naivete would cost you dearly."

As he said this, Link made a few gestures to Celine and Eliard behind him, which meant, "Follow my lead, find an opening to kill this High Elf!"

Evelina was stunned. "Link, you..."

She thought that being a lord, Link would be more mindful of his own reputation and accept Ariel's challenge.

She did not expect Link and the others to gang up on Ariel.

Eliard was first to initiate the attack. He took out the Dragon Power runestone that Link had given him and cast a Level-10 shield on himself. He then hid behind a rock nearby, waiting for a chance to attack Ariel.

Celine too retreated and climbed up a tree 300 feet away. She then took out her rifle and waited patiently for an opening.

In that time, Link's eyes did not leave Ariel, wary that she might launch an attack at any moment.

Like a lion that would hunt for prey as weak and defenseless as a rabbit with all its strength, Link never had the habit of giving up an advantage in battle. He, nor anyone else in Ferde, had never concerned himself with heroics. What the Magicians of Ferde had always strived for was a more stable and efficient way of solving problems.

Right now, Ariel was one of those problems that needed to be resolved, and the most efficient way of solving it was by besieging her together. Link saw no benefit in him accepting a one-on-one duel with her.



The High Elf had come looking for her own demise, and so she shall receive it!

Ariel did not anticipate such a response from Link. She laughed coldly. "I thought you were a hero, Link. I never took you for a coward who enjoyed ganging up on people like this! Seems I was mistaken."

She turned towards Evelina. "Evie, is this who you have chosen to follow? Don't you feel the slightest bit of shame?"

Though she was a rebel at heart, the mainstream values of the continent resonated with Evelina greatly. Hearing what Ariel had said, Evelina's face turned red. She went silent for a moment and then stammered, "My lord, I don't think this is right. Your reputation is at stake here."

Link continued staring at Ariel. He slowly pulled out the Dragon King's Fury sword. As the blade hissed against its scabbard, Link's mind grew calmer. "Evie, there's only one law in this world that matters, and that's the survival of the fittest! Morality, code, reputation, they're all mere tools and fetters that can be discarded at any time as long as the price is right. And right now, you're being shackled by Ariel's code of combat."

Evelina could not think of a rebuttal to Link's words.

Ariel had heard what Link had said. Stunned for a moment, she sighed. "I admit, I don't see things as much as you do. Also, I've not come prepared to face all of you, which means that this is not a fight I have any chance of winning. Just wait and see, there will be a next time!"

Saying this, she took out a green, fruit-like object. There were silver markings on the fruit. With a slight squeeze, the fruit was instantly reduced to mush. A thick swirl of silver moonlight suddenly obscured her entire body, which then began to fade away.

Evelina shouted upon seeing what had happened. "She's casting Moonlight, a Level-19 spell! She's trying to escape!"

Moonlight

Level-19 spell.

Description: The user infuses a large amount of Nature Power into a moonlight fruit from the World Tree in order to cast the spell. After casting the spell, its user will be

able to ignore all attacks from the realm of Firuman and teleport back to Andwar in the Isle of Dawn.

(Note: A precious relic of the High Elves.)

"Trying to escape, eh?" Without hesitation, Link stabbed his sword through a Despair Ball, and the sword's tip appeared instantly beside Ariel. He then let his Dragon Power flow into it in a torrent, activating a new spatial spell: Spatial Disintegration.

Spatial Disintegration.

Rankless Master-level Spell

Cost: 7000 points or more.

Description: The user spends a large amount of Dragon Power and sets the fabric of space ablaze, giving rise to an inferno with unimaginable destructive power.

(Note: It will burn everything to a crisp!)

The spell was Link's newest invention, a combination of the dragons' Void Destructor spell, his own Spatial Rend spell and the Boundless Sharpness property of his Dragon King's Fury sword. Its destructive power was virtually limitless. The more Dragon Power it received, the more destruction it would be able to wreak.

It was safe to say that nothing in the realm of Firuman would be able to withstand the spell's destructive power. An object would be able to resist it if it was powerful enough, though.

Once the spell was cast, the space around Ariel was engulfed in its fire. The heat was unlike anything she had experienced. Anything the fire grazed immediately evaporated. Not even its ashes were spared.

This was what happened when space was set on fire.

In an instant, the spatial inferno had spread to Ariel's body. Her eyes widened, and the silver light around her expanded. Bundles of the silver light came off, trying to keep the fire outside the barrier of light.

In that moment, the gentle moonlight and the relentless spatial fire struggled against

each other. Violent energy ripples spread out from the clash of the two energies. The spectacle on the cliff was blinding, as if a silver sun had appeared on it.

Evelina, who was standing nearby, could feel the heat from the cliff. Fearing that she might also be caught in the inferno, she quickly took a step back and cast a defensive spell on herself.

As soon as she backed away, there was a sudden bang. A streak of light shot out from the top of the tree beside her. The attack hurtled towards the ball of silver light and merged with it in an instant.

Evelina was stunned. Did Celine open fire? Did it even have any effect?

A moment later, she heard a pained moan. Before long, the silver ball of light before them disappeared. Ariel was gone without a trace. The spatial inferno had also gone out. All that remained on the cliff was a smooth rock surface that looked like it had been polished recently.

In the end, Ariel still managed to elude them.

"What happened to her?" asked Evelina as she rushed to Link's side.

Link sheathed back his sword and spoke plainly, "Both her legs had been burned badly. My Dragon Power had entered her body. I was able to cripple her in the end, so even if she's not dead, she'll probably wish that she was at this point."

"Ah! Did she really lose?" Evelina stammered.

"She has paid dearly for her arrogance. Even though Moonlight was a high-level spell, its area of effect was way too small. I was able to break through it with everything I had," explained Link.

The spell was indeed Level-19, but the amount of Nature Power that Ariel had infused into the World Tree's fruit was too little. In the span of a mere half-second, Link had used up 15,000 Dragon Power points and was able to reduce the Moonlight spell to a paper-thin layer. Celine saw the opportunity and took her shot. Her bullet broke through that last layer. Without losing its momentum, it struck both of Ariel's legs. Once embedded inside her body, Link's Dragon Power immediately spread inside her.

If the Moonlight spell's teleportation ability did not activate in time, Ariel would have

been a pile of smoldering ashes by now.

Eliard came out from his hiding place. The fight had already ended before he even had the chance to make a move. Right now, his heart was beating violently in his chest. His yearning for Legendary power had intensified now. After calming his nerves, Eliard asked, "Link, what's our next step, now that the Ethereal Prince is dead?"

"We'll continue our journey down south. I have no intention of making this trip a wasted one. We'll go after some normal Ethereals. Of course, we shouldn't take too much time in this. I'll give us two more days. We'd best pick up our pace now."

"Alright." Eliard and Celine did not seem to object to this.

Adrenaline was still pumping through Evelina. She made a conscious effort to nod back at Link.

...

Isle of Dawn, Andwar, beneath the World Tree

A flash of silver moonlight suddenly appeared in the air. Two seconds later, a figure fell to the ground. It was Ariel.

She was in bad shape. Both her legs were gone, Her body was a melted mess of flesh and blood. Hot air issued out of her nostrils and mouth. Though she was barely able to withstand the agony, she writhed and screamed uncontrollably in pain.

When she appeared, the World Tree's Nature Power flowed into her body. A few seconds later, the Dragon Power that had been rending through her body was suppressed completely. Ariel sighed in relief, glad that the pain was finally over.

She laid quietly on the ground, letting the World Tree heal her wounds. This time, her wounds were severe. Her legs were beyond restoration, and the World Tree could do nothing about it. Still, it served as a cruel lesson for Ariel.

She looked at the World Tree and swore through gritted teeth, "Thank you for the lesson, Lord of Ferde!"

Minutes passed in silence, and then she heard footsteps. Ariel turned and saw a familiar figure. It was her mother, the queen of the High Elves.

"What happened?"

"Mother, I met Link. I lost to him." Ariel sighed. Her losses had been grievous.

"It's alright, what matters is that you came back here alive. Tell me exactly what happened."

Ariel nodded and recounted the events that had transpired to her mother. When she was done, the queen was silent for a few seconds. Then she said, "He even managed to break through your Moonlight spell. I can't believe his power has grown this much."

"He did use up all his power trying to break through it, though," added Ariel.

"In any case, this is bad news. Looks like the thing up north needs to speed up. Once you recover from your injuries, go to the North immediately."

"But mother, that's where the God of Destruction's forces lie."

"I know. All the more reason why you should go there now. The Dark Elves must exist. The humans are our shield, and what good is a shield without a spear? Do you understand what I'm trying to say?"

Ariel was silent. She wanted to voice her objection against the matter in the North. Suddenly, she remembered what Link had said. In this world, there was no clear distinction between light and darkness.

Only one rule reigned supreme, and that was the survival of the fittest.

And so she nodded. "I understand, mother."

# Chapter 549

## More Importantly, It's Growing

Two days later, Link's group returned from the South, fully loaded.

This time, they brought back 569 Ethereal Crystals. They'd practically wiped out all the Ethereal Warriors around the Syndicate.

After returning to Ferde, Link didn't rest. He immediately gathered the core Magicians of the territory to start producing Ethereal magic equipment.

This equipment could transform into Legendary-level power, making up for the lack of high-level martial combat in Ferde. In other words, these were strategic resources. They had to be perfect and flawless.

Naturally, this required powerful Magicians.

At the present, there were six core Magicians in Ferde. Other than Link, there was Eliard, Vance, Alloa, and Celine.

Celine especially had studied Link's enchantments for about half a year without rest. Paired with Link's obvious help, she was very advanced in enchantments now. She was practically equal to Vance and the others.

Other than Alloa who used Link's Dragon Power due to her special circumstances, the other five were all above Level-8. Eliard's Sunlight Power was even in the upper stages of Level-9. His power was quite active too. Soon, he would reach Level-10.

This was the most powerful force in the history of humanity; they could look over any other human territory arrogantly. However, compared to the 80,000-strong Magician army of at least Level-6 Magicians from the Isle of Dawn, they were still far off.

Just these few hundred Ethereal Crystals was already stretching them thin, let alone being able to deal with the Isle of Dawn. Each Ethereal Crystal had a unique function. They couldn't use mass production. Due to the high level, they also couldn't get help from ordinary Magicians.

Thus, the six had to process the crystals one by one. It was very inefficient.

The bottom line was that Ferde needed top-level Magicians. Thus, after working for a day, Link and Eliard walked to Evelina's imprisonment room.

Even though she'd gone to the South and had worked hard, she was still technically Ferde's prisoner. Plus, her many subconscious reactions along the way had showed that she didn't really want to join Ferde. She was just staying here due to fear of Link's power.

This wasn't a good thing, because once she had the ability to escape from Link's control or was intimidated by someone stronger, Evelina would sell Ferde out. It was just like how she'd betrayed the Syndicate.

Halfway there, Link asked, "Eliard, what do you think of Evelina?"

Link's knowledge of her was limited to the game. There, Evelina had been a wandering vigilante. She'd walked around and sometimes joined important battles but never joined the core of the alliance.

In reality, Eliard was always with Evelina. He would be more familiar with her.

Eliard flinched and then nodded. "She's good. I would sometimes discuss magic with her, like secret spells and techniques. She would answer straightforwardly without keeping anything back."

"Oh." Link seemed to have some thoughts.

Since she was at the point of sharing secret spells with Eliard, there was something to be considered. Just like technology from earth, there were two levels of spells.

The first was magic theory. This was the basics and there was nothing to hide. Even if you figured it out first, others wouldn't be too far off.

For example, Link had created the spatial theory. There must be other spatial Magicians in the world that reached similar levels but were just a bit off. There wasn't a really significant gap.

The second level was in specific applications. This was the specific spells and techniques. These were secrets—the things that could cause the gap in abilities.

For example, everyone knew the principle of leverage. However, some would use a wooden stick to throw stones while others would use a catapult. The difference was too big to put in words.

It could be said that secret spells were a Magician's best tricks. They wouldn't tell people who weren't close or trusted. Since Evelina shared them with Eliard so straightforwardly, she either had feelings for Eliard or Ferde. They were both good things.

These thoughts flashed through Link's mind. "I see," he said. "Later, you persuade her. I'll just stand to the side."

Eliard nodded. He'd been wanting Evelina to join Ferde. He had said this many times before, but Evelina never gave a definite answer. She always had some worry. He didn't mind trying to persuade her again. If she didn't agree, he would come a second or third time. He felt that if he tried enough times, she would agree.

The place where Evelina was "imprisoned" wasn't far. It was a guest room in Eliard's sub-tower. The two arrived quickly.

At the entrance, Link stood to the side while Eliard knocked. "Eve, are you free?"

"Of course. Come in," Evelina said.

Eliard opened the door and entered.

Evelina was only imprisoned in name. In reality, Eliard didn't put any restrictions on Evelina. As long as she wasn't walking around on the street, she could use all the resources in the tower, such as the Elemental Pool and alchemy room.

The guest room had everything necessary too. Eliard had even remodeled the room in the style of the High Elves.

Entering the room, one could see many fine silver veins on the doorframe. Going further in, there was a sturdy and smooth wood floor and a deer head hanging on the wall. The living room had an elven warmer. The bedroom, bathroom, and toilet were all decorated sincerely too.

Link followed Eliard into the living room and felt that he was in a different world. It wasn't like a room in a Mage Tower at all. It was more like a house in the woods.



In the room, Evelina was lying lazily on a leather chair, reading a magic book. Link peered at it and discovered it was the enchantment book he'd written.

Seeing Link and Eliard come, Evelina set the book down. Her hand twitched and an innocent-looking magic puppet brought two cups of hot water over.

This magic puppet was a top-class product of the Gold Rune Workshop. They were mass-produced now and were popular with the nobles. Many people would come to Ferde just to order a pretty servant. The price was good too. The workshop had a list of specific prices, clearly stating the different materials and functions. The price went from 500 to 10,000 gold coins.

Evelina smiled. "You two must be busy. How come you're here?"

Link sat on the side without replying. He just blew at his hot drink. Eliard cleared his throat and said straightforwardly, "Evelina, here's the deal. We sincerely invite you to join Ferde."

Evelina arched an eyebrow. Smiling at Eliard, she said, "Aren't I already in Ferde?"

Eliard shook his head. "No, not just like this... What I mean is, we're inviting you to join the core group of Magicians."

He was being very clear. Evelina fell silent and glanced at the quiet Link. Then she looked back at Eliard. "You and the lord are both here. Is this the ultimatum something?"

Eliard shook his head. "Of course not. We just need you."

Evelina pursed her lips. After a pregnant pause, she confessed, "To be honest, even if you have the Ethereal Crystals and Link, I still don't see Ferde's future. The Isle of Dawn won't let you develop like this. When none of the overt tricks can solve a problem, it'll lead to an outright war."

Eliard didn't give up. "That's why we need you... I need you."

His words were direct and his tone was earnest.

This wasn't just Ferde wanting a strong figure to join. After all these days, Eliard felt that he really wanted to be with this half-elf. He didn't want to become enemies trying

to kill each other someday.

Evelina laughed instinctively. Before, she would definitely scoff at something like this. She would sneer and say mockingly, "Who are you to interfere with my fate?"

But this time, her laugh cut off halfway. She saw the fervent anticipation in Eliard's eyes. For some reason, she felt deep inside that if she missed this chance, she would never find anyone who fit with her so well.

She couldn't face that heated gaze. After two seconds, she couldn't do it anymore and averted her eyes.

Lowering her head, she murmured, "Eliard, I'm not as good as you think. I can't meet all of your expectations—"

Before she could finish, Eliard wanted to try again, but Link reached out to stop him. He stared at Evelina and uttered, "You fear the Isle of Dawn."

He got straight to the point!

Evelina's head shot up. "Should I not? The power of an 80,000-strong Magician army can wipe Ferde off the face of the planet. Who can stop them?"

Link shook his head. "No," he said seriously. "Evelina, you're too obsessed with the comparison of power. It's not that important."

Seeing that Evelina wanted to refute him, Link continued, "I have a sword and the Isle of Dawn has 1000 swords. They can use 1000 swords to kill me, but I also have the opportunity to use one sword to defeat the Isle of Dawn. The number of swords isn't actually that significant."

Right now, they were both afraid of each other. Of course, Ferde's power wasn't real, but as time went on, they would only grow stronger.

"But the Isle of Dawn has the Level-19 World Tree. You won't have a chance." Evelina shook her head.

Link chuckled. "Then why am I still alive?" he asked.

"Uh..."

"I'm alive because the Isle of Dawn can't handle me. Since they can't kill me, they'll be afraid of my reaction. During this time, Ferde will keep strengthening. There are close to 300 million humans. There is unlimited potential. But the Isle of Dawn only has three million people. So what if their power reaches the pinnacle?"

Evelina had never thought of this.

Link continued without stopping, "The High Elves have a stable tradition and they're used to peace. Their power won't change too much in the near future, but as you've seen, Ferde will keep going. It's possible that we'll reach the Isle of Dawn's level within five or ten years!"

Link didn't add any fervent emotion while speaking. His tone didn't change either. He was just stating facts with a cool gaze. It made him seem indescribably confident, like he grasped the truth.

Evelina was a bit swayed.

Seeing her soften, Eliard walked up and grasped her hand. "Eve, why did you leave the Isle of Dawn? Wasn't it because of the arrogance of those pure elves? Ferde doesn't have that. Here, the only thing that matters is your magic. No one will look down on you because of your bloodline or background. Ferde is developing quickly, but it's still fragile. Stay and protect it."

Conation appeared on Evelina's face. Her lips quivered; she wanted to say something.

Link chose this time to add, "Eve, the current power difference isn't that important."

"Then what is important?"

"Who's growing."

As long as they kept growing, they would surpass the other someday.

Evelina's mouth opened a bit. She looked dazed. Being in Ferde for these days, she indeed saw that the territory was changing. Something new was created almost every day. In the Mage Tower, new spells would be invented daily.

This kind of place was growing indeed. Right now, it may just be a small tree, but as long as it wasn't destroyed, it would rise to the sky one day.

Then she looked to Eliard. Something warm flowed through her heart.

People were strange. You would feel disgusted by some people at first glance; but for other people, your heart would speed up. To Evelina, Eliard was the type that sped up her heart. In her eyes, this half-elf was practically perfect.

Finally, Evelina held Eliard's hand too. "You asked me this question more than ten times. This time, I'll agree."

Ecstasy filled Eliard's eyes. If Link wasn't there, he probably would've kissed Evelina hard now.

Link wasn't stupid. "Eliard, I'll go now. You can take care of everything else."

As he spoke, white light surged around him and he disappeared. A short while later, he was inside the main tower. After sitting down, Link took out the Moon Stone reward from the mission. Just as he was about to study it, someone knocked on the door.

"Enter."

Gildern walked in with a letter. It had a glowing red magic seal. Seeing it, Link's brows furrowed.

"Lord, this letter is handwritten by General Kanorse of the Orida Fortress."

# Chapter 550

## The Moonstone and the Realm's Elite (1)

Link tapped on the envelope that he had received from Gildern. A mild current of Dragon Power flowed out from his hand, undoing the seal on the envelope. He then took out the letter contained inside it.

He recognized Kanorse's handwriting on the letter. There were three pages in total, detailing what had happened in Orida Fortress since Link left. Kanorse had even used red ink to mark out anything he thought merited Link's attention.

There were two important things that Kanorse had emphasized with red ink.

The first important matter was that there was a slight change in the equipment used by the scouts of the enemy in the Black Forest. Low-ranking soldiers were still using standard equipment forged by the Dark Elves themselves, but higher-ranking officers with higher combat power had been seen armed with dwarven gear. There were also a few accounts of some of them using magical weapons made by the Yabba people, which included high-precision magical rifles. With such weapons at their disposal, they were even able to kill a high-ranking Level-7 general.

Kanorse figured that the dwarves of the Hengdun Mountain Range were supplying weapons to the Army of Destruction. Kanorse had written quite plainly on the subject of the magical machinery. He hoped that Link would conduct an investigation on the Yabba people currently residing in Ferde in order to make sure that they were not collaborating with Ferde's enemy.

Link frowned upon reading this. The fact that the enemy had been seen using Yabba weapons troubled him deeply.

It was common knowledge that the Yabba people were currently living in Ferde. The whole continent was aware of this. What was also common knowledge was the fact that Ferde specialized in trade and commerce. The country had been dealing in the trade of clay and gyromagnetic iron. Only recently did it begin exporting magical equipment. Ferde's wares could be found virtually everywhere.

Anyone would easily put two and two together and come to the conclusion that Ferde might be encouraging the Yabba people to sell their magical equipment to the Army of Destruction just to earn a quick buck.

Despite what he had written, Link could clearly sense Kanorse's distrust towards the Yabba people. This raised a few red flags for Link.

Perhaps this was the Agatha Nagas' way of sowing discord among us, thought Link.

The second matter was just as important. A tribe of the Beastmen had left the Golden Plains, traversed the Hengduan Mountain Range and finally entered the Black Forest. Evidently, this meant that they had formed an alliance with the Army of Destruction.

According to the information that Kanorse had received, there was a brutal civil war among the Beastmen in the Golden Plains. A warlord called Avatar was able to finally unify the whole tribe and proclaimed himself the one and true king of the Beastmen. But not everyone agreed to his rule.

Storm Warlord Parmese led his tribe on an exodus all the way up north in order to join the Army of Destruction. There were at least 500,000 people in his tribe, which was a tenth of the total Beastmen population. In Parmese's tribe, there were more than 50,000 able-bodied Warriors.

The Beastmen were known for their raw strength and fearlessness. With standard military equipment and organization, they were basically a killing machine on the battlefield.

The fact that a Beastman Warlord had joined the ranks of the Army of Darkness was most worrying.

After reading the letter, Link was deep in thought. A few minutes later, Mana flowed out from his hand and ripped the letter to shreds. He then turned to Gildern, who had been standing in a corner all this time, and asked, "What are your thoughts on the Yabba people?"

Gildern pondered for a moment and then said, "Not a bad bunch. They've been hard at work making a home for themselves on Blue Stone Isle. They're also a friendly lot. Never needed to worry about being scammed while doing business with them. They would always lay out all the numbers of a business deal in black and white, telling you what they hope to earn from it, which is usually between five percent to 20 percent.

Quite reasonable, if you ask me. They're also model citizens of Ferde. No Yabba individual has ever been involved in an incident in Ferde. All in all, they're never the trouble-making kind."

It was clear that the Yabba people abide by the laws of Ferde to the letter. What this also meant was that they were careful enough not to be on the humans' bad books.

How could the Yabba people be selling weapons to the Army of Destruction with that mindset at such a critical time? One should bear in mind that there were only ten thousand Yabba people as of now. One misstep could spell the end of their entire race.

Hearing this, Link nodded. "I see. Alright, we're done here. You can leave now."

"Thank you." Gildern immediately left the Mage Tower.

Link rubbed his forehead with a finger as he pondered on what he had read. Suddenly, he had an idea. Activating a Spiritual Transmission spell, he summoned Elin, who had been idling in the Mage Tower.

Ten minutes later, Elin pranced into his room. "Lord, is something the matter?"

"Sit, please," said Link with a smile.

Elin was a bit nervous. Right now, Link was the Lord of Ferde and a Legendary master whose name was known far and wide across the continent. His every word and action determined the fate of her entire race. Though Link had spoken casually to her, Elin sat straight in one of the chairs in a corner, not daring to act casually in his presence like before.

Link proceeded to tell her everything he had read from Kanorse's letter. He then said, "Elin, bring this news to your Chancellor. Tell him not to let his guard down and keep a tight leash on the Yabba people.

Elin was taken aback. Her gemstone-like eyes widened. She then asked Link worriedly, "Lord, do you suspect that Blue Stone Isle is illegally exporting their magical weapons?"

Elin was confident that Blue Stone Isle would never do such a thing, but it did not matter what she thought. Link did not trust the Yabba people. This was the sad truth of living under someone else's roof. No matter how generous their master might seem,

they were still no more than guests in his domain.

Seeing the taut smile on her face and her two hands squeezed into fists, Link sighed inwardly. He spoke gently, "I trust you, but the hearts of the common folk can be easily swayed. A thousand miles from here, the Warriors of Orida Fortress have watched their comrades be slaughtered by the same magical weapons being sold from Blue Stone Isle. Tensions are running high there right now. I just don't want to give the soldiers there any more reason to channel their discontent towards Blue Stone Isle. Do you understand?"

Elin understood what Link had meant. She sighed and nodded at him. "I'll pass on your message to the Craftsmen's Guild."

"You can go now. Tell the Chancellor on my behalf that we're still friends!"

"I will." Elin gave Link a bow. She then turned around and left the room.

After a moment of silence, Link decided that he would pay the Golden Plains a visit in the near future.

Link was on good terms with the Glorious Warlord Avatar and the Sky Shattering Warlord Holun. Since the Storm Warlord had joined forces with the Army of Destruction, Link thought he might as well help Orida Fortress receive Avatar's aid.

Link decided to make this trip to the Golden Plains by himself.

The reason was simple: things had been quite tense between him and the High Elves. With all kinds of spatial spells at his disposal, Link would be able to see things through without much fuss if he were to venture out alone without anyone else holding him down.

Still, this was a risky affair. He was still not at his full strength.

I used up all of my strength when going up against the World Impaler. I probably won't survive another encounter with Ariel, especially if she brings her friends around next time. I need to become stronger, he thought.

At this, Link took out the moonstone again.

There were many factors affecting a person's power level. Everyone's case was



different, but the purity of a person's power was a common factor. Though Link's power was called Flawless Dragon Power, he had recently begun to feel the effects of the impurity of one's power.

There were two effects Link had felt. Firstly, his Dragon Power was unable to cope with the strain of his research of higher-level Legendary spells. Secondly, his Dragon Power was now increasing at a noticeably slower rate.

The winds of change were now blowing through the continent of Firuman. Masters were popping up everywhere, but still Link felt that his power had already hit a high point.

As of now, he had a maximum of 17,300 Dragon Power points and 500 Omni Points. In total, he had 17,800 points. To reach Level-12, he needed at least 25,000 Dragon Power points. At his current rate, Link estimated that he would need another two years to reach Level-12.

He could not wait that long.

In the game world, geniuses like Eliard, Ariel, Annie, Kanorse and the others had probably received the realm's blessing after reaching Legendary. The increase of their power level did not slow down one bit. For example, after reaching Legendary, Eliard was able to hit Level-19 in six years.

Link shuddered at the thought of how fast Eliard had managed to level up.

This was where this piece of moonstone would come in handy.



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